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COMICS FEATURE

ISSUE NUMBER 23/24

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FEATURE NEWS

KLAUS JANSON LEAVES DAREDEVIL,

WILLIAM JOHNSON AND MIKE MIGNOLA TO BE NEW TEAM

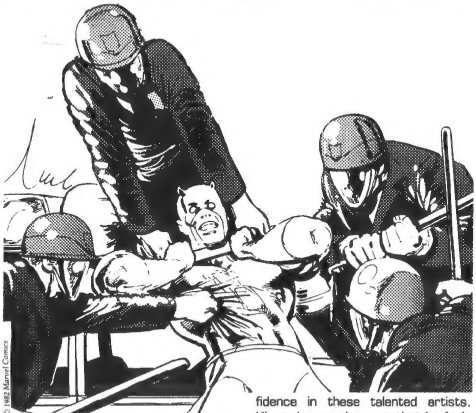
In an unexpected developement Klaus Janson has removed himself from the art chores on **Daredevil**. Coming hot on the heels of Marvel Comics guarantee that he would continue at least through issue #200 this was suprising news indeed.

The title which had soared to the pinnacle of sucess under the team of Frank Miller and Klaus Janson now faces a less-than-certain future. Many were watching to see how the book would fare in the post-Miller era, under the art mastery of Klaus Janson. Miller had resigned from book several months ago in order to assume the new **Ronin** series at DC Comics. Now, with Janson also off of the book, Marvel is under even more pressure in trying to maintain the quality and sales of the title.

Janson told **Comics Feature** that he "Felt it was time to move on. I was generally frustrated by my efforts. They were not up to par. They were hurting the book and my credibility as an artist and were not living up to the expectations of the readers. I feel sorry for the new artist who will have to follow the Miller/Janson era."

"William Johnson is the new artist. I have confidence that he is quite capable. The book will look a little different but it'll work out fine.

"I just wanted to lead a normal life so I quit. I'll probably freelance for everybody and not take a regular book assignment until the fall. Perhaps I will take on a mini-series but I doubt it. I want to take some time off and go to Europe for a few weeks and to sit on the beach. I want to be able to eat supper at eight like a normal person.



© 1992 Marvel Comics

"I have been offered a number of jobs—a Daredevil Graphic Novel by Marvel, a graphic novel by DC. I will be inking two of Gene Colan's Batman stories, pencilling and coloring the **Star Wars** Annual, and coloring Will Eisner's **John Law** for Eclipse.

"In the fall Archie [Goodwin] and I are talking about doing a book for Epic. In the meantime I just want to lead a normal life."

William Johnson and Mike Mignola have been tentatively confirmed as the new art team by Marvel Comics. The team has recently undertaken to produce the last few issues of the **Master of Kung Fu** title after Gene Day's untimely death. The issues that have appeared have looked fairly good although whether this inexperienced team is ready to make the leap from a book predestined for termination to one of Marvel's top-selling and prestigious titles is an open question. Lea Sapp, Marvel's press liason, says that Marvel has the utmost confidence in these talented artists. Klaus Janson also says that he feels that they will do a competent job. But only time will tell if they are able to live up to expectations. Certainly the fan market will be closely watching this succession. Denny O'Neil has written several of the upcoming issues already and will remain with the book to provide continuity.

Issue #196 will be Janson's last issue although he has done eight pages for issue #197. That issue will be set partly in New York and partly in Japan. The book will then continue to showcase Daredevil's exploits in Japan through issue #200. Johnson's interest and background in the martial arts is expected to be of great assistance in this sequence. It is hoped that by the time that Daredevil returns to the familiar setting of New York both the readers will have had time to aclimate their tastes to the style of Johnson and Mignola and the team will have had time to familiarize themselves with the feeling of the book.

Kerry Gammill's pencils from an upcoming INDIANA JONES.

Howard Chaykin's pencils for the cover of INDIANA JONES #8.

MORE NEW TITLES FROM PACIFIC & CAPITAL

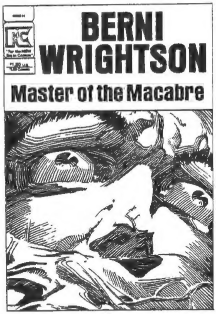
Pacific Comics, the publishing company run by the brothers Schanes, Steve and Bill, with the help of Managing Editor David Scroggy, has a number of new projects in the works. Bruce Jones, who recently started as editor of **Alien Worlds**, the science-fiction anthology series, and **Twisted Tales**, the horror title, has still another book about to release. This title, as yet unnamed, will feature a lady spy as the lead story with backups featuring short science-fiction pieces by Jones and Al Williamson. Williamson is long known for his fine work in this genre, is currently adapting Return of the Jedi for Marvel Comics, and made an appearance on a story also scripted by Jones for the first issue of **Alien Worlds**.

In a relationship that Scroggy describes as similar to the one with Jones, Bill Dubay will begin an anthology title. The artists for this title will include Rudy Nebres in a series to be called "Weirdling", John Severin in a series set in the Pacific at the beginning of the Second World War and entitled "Spitfire", and an as yet-unnamed third artist. The book will appear in June.

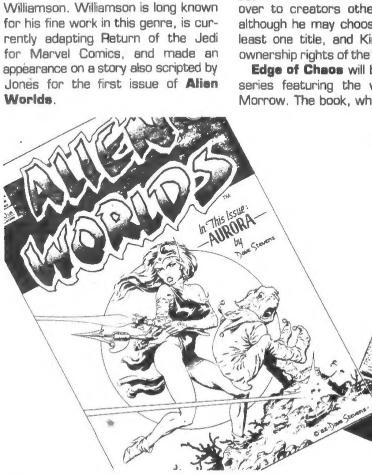
A collection of Bernie Wrightson stories followed by a collection of Wally Wood stories will also see release. The Wood volume bears a cover by Dave Stevens. Both books consist of material which previously appeared in Warren magazines which has been newly colored for this presentation.

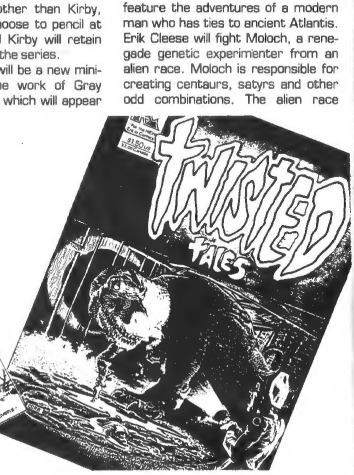
Jack Kirby is creating the concepts on which three new books will be based. The books will be turned over to creators other than Kirby, although he may choose to pencil at least one title, and Kirby will retain ownership rights of the series.

Edge of Chaos will be a new mini-series featuring the work of Gray Morrow. The book, which will appear



in May, June and July, will be written, pencilled and inked by Morrow and will feature the adventures of a modern man who has ties to ancient Atlantis. Erik Cleese will fight Moloch, a renegade genetic experimenter from an alien race. Moloch is responsible for creating centaurs, satyrs and other odd combinations. The alien race





resembles the gods of Greek myth. Cleese himself has a sidekick who is a humanoid mandrill with the head of a mandrill on a human-size body.

Capital Publications announced the creation of two new color comic titles to be released in 1983. Both will be 32-page Baxter books and will appear in full color. Steven Grant and Rich Larson will respectively be writing and drawing **Whisper** while Mike Baron and Jeff Butler will craft **The Badger**.

Grant is well-known for his work at Marvel while Larson was responsible for the series of Marvel character portfolios produced by Sal Q Productions. Whisper will feature the Adventures of a female Ninja.

Nexus was the first regular comic book title to be written by Mike Baron and now with that book in its third issue he has undertaken a second title. In his interview with **LOC** some time ago he described his concept for a book to feature Ham the Weather Wizard. A secondary character was to be the Badger. Capital has shifted the emphasis and the title will now feature Ham as a secondary character with The Badger in the title role. Art will be by Jeff Butler, previously a commercial artist for such companies as Anheuser Busch.

Another Capital Idea - by Baron & Butler - coming Spring '83!

GIORDANO PROMOTED

DC Comics has announced that Managing Editor Dick Giordano has been promoted to the position of Vice President-Executive Editor of the company. Jenette Kahn, the President and Publisher of the company, made the announcement and stated that "Dick is one of the most beloved and respected persons in the entire comic book industry. He is renowned as much for his integrity and sensitivity to the creative process as he is for his own considerable talent."

Giordano was born in Manhattan's Little Italy district on July 20, 1932. At the age of seven he became enamored with comics and began his artistic career by drawing on paper bags. Rising from that to the position of Editor at Charlton Comics during the mid-1960s he helped develope such major talents as Steve Skeates, Denny O'Neil, and Jim Aparo as well as working with Steve Ditko. In 1967 he moved over to DC Comics where as an editor he was able to bring over much of the creative talent he had previously worked with over at Charlton. He brought a new and interesting perspective to such titles as **Aquaman**, with writing by Steve Skeates and art by Jim Aparo, **The Creeper**, with storyline by Denny O'Neil and pencils by Steve Ditko.

Finding greater opportunities in various forms of packaging and advertising art on a free-lance basis Dick Giordano left DC to establish Continuity Associates with partner Neal Adams and later went on to set up Dik-Art Associates while Adams continued Continuity as both an advertising design firm and a graphic packaging company. Prompting Giordano's decision to break off from the original firm was a desire to continue to do work in regular comics for DC and as time passed Giordano began to resume a larger and larger role at the company.

Finally, in 1980 he returned to DC Comics as an editor. In August of 1981 Kahn made him Managing Editor of the entire line and now has promoted him to the position of Vice President.

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LANCELOT STRONG
THE SHIELD
WEISS
SEVERIN

MARVEL NEWS TIDBITS

The new creative team on **Indiana Jones**, beginning with issue seven, will be David Michelinie, Kerry Gammill, and Sam Dele Rosa.

Marvel Super Special #28, featuring "Octopussy" will ship in May while #27, which ships in June, will adapt "Fire and Ice," and #28, the August issue, presents "Krull."

Mysterions, the color comic series, has been cancelled.

Team America guest-stars in **New Mutants #8**. Supposedly the book will present a "startling revelation about that group you'll have to see to believe."

The **Hulk Annual #12**, by Bill Mantlo and Herb Trimpe, will ship in April.

Mary Jane Watson returns in **Spiderman #243**.

Thor #334 begins a major quest for the Rune Staff, which can free Jane Foster from Sif's body.

The Scarlet Witch guest-stars in **Dr. Strange #60**.

The Soviet Super Soldiers fight Rom in the 45th issue of his book.

Marvel Team Up #132 co-stars Spiderman and Mr. Fantastic.

Fantastic Four #257 features Galactus.

In **Peter Parker #81**, the Punisher first battles Cloak and Dagger and then takes on the Kingpin.

Alpha Flight #1, a 48-page book ships in April. The team battles Tundra (not Thundra).

What if #40 offers a world in which the Master of the Mystic Arts is Baron Mardo.

Addisional new Marvel projects are planned for release during the upcoming year. This includes several newly announced graphic novels: The Thing by Tom DeFalco and John Romita, Coman by an as yet unannounced team, The Hulk by Jim Shooter, Brett Blevins, and Bince Colletta, Thor by Jim Shooter and Bill Sienkiewicz. Also planned for 1983 are five additional mini-series: **Kid Colt** with art by Herb Trimpe, **Jack of Hearts** by Bill Mantlo and Rick Leonardi, **Black Panther** with the creative team of Denys Cowan and Jim Shooter, and a teaming of Daz-Dazzler with the Beast. Finally there will be an adaptation of the **Rock and Rule** movie and an X-Men/Micronauts series by Bill Mantlo and Butch Guice.

Marvel Graphic Novel #7 will feature Killraven in a new story by Don McGregor and Craig Russell. This material, in reduced form, was originally scheduled for publication in **Epic**.

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Marvel Graphic Novel #8 will be "Dazzler: The Movie" and will co-star Storm of theX-Men. Jim Shooter and Frank Springer present a story in which Dazzler, while making a movie, is beset by the anti-mutant public and has her powers permanently altered.

Quicksilver will guest-star in **Thing #3**. Dazzler battles rogue in issue #28. **Thor #235** features the final fate of Jane Foster.

Crystar #3 guest-stars Dr. Strange.

The first **Hawkeye** will ship May 3rd as will **Return of the Jedi #1**.

The FF Annual this year, number 17, will be a sequel to **Fantastic Four #2** and explain what happened to the town with the Skrulls-cum-cons.

Avengers #235 begins a multi-part story.

In Marvel Team-Up #133 Spiderman and the Fantastic Four.

Ralph Macchio and George Perez begin a four-part Black Widow series in **Marvel Fanfare #10**. Additional pencils are by Bob Layton and Luke McDonnell with inks by Brett Breeding.

DC NEWS TIDBITS

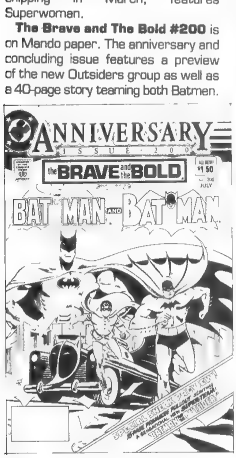
Blackawk #260 is by Pat Boyette, with a story focusing on Chuck, Doug Wildey, with a tale of Blackhawk, and John Severin in an adventure featuring Stanislaus. Dan Spiegle produced the framing sequence.

DC Presents #59 teams Superman with the Legion of Substitute heroes in a story drawn by Keith Giffen.

A new villain, Trident, appears in **Teen Titans #33**.

The **DC Comics Presents Annual**, shipping in March, features Superwoman.

The Brave and The Bold #200 is on Mando paper. The anniversary and concluding issue features a preview of the new Outsiders group as well as a 40-page story teaming both Batmen.



The New Doom Patrol guest-star in **Supergirl #10** while the **Teen Titans** guest-star in the forth issue of the new **Outsiders** book.

Amazing Man, named after Centaur's Golden Age character, will be featured both in the JSA story and in a back-up origin story in **All-Star #23.**

Ronin debuts in April. See **Comics Feature #25** for an interview with Frank Miller and **Comic News #2** for a special preview of Ronin.

Omega Men will be raised to a $1.25 cover price in August. **Camelot** is running one month behind schedule and is planned to ship every five weeks instead of every four.

Masters of the Universe will appear as 65 animated episodes on T.V.

HERO GAMES
Champions II has been published.

AMERICOMICS #2 will star the Messenger, Shade, and Tara.

FIRST COMICS, INC.

When **Starslayer** goes over to First Comics, Lenin Delsol will be the penciller. Delsol was the penciller for the Sargon Supporting feature which appeared in **Warp #1**. Mike Gustovich will be inking Delsol's pencils.

Delsol will also be doing a three part Sargon series which will run in Warp #5-7. This series will be written by John Ostrander and inked by Al Gordon.

George Freeman will pencil, ink, and color **Warp Special #2**, which will be written by Peter Gillis. The book, which will appear this summer, will tell the story of what happened to Chaos immediately before the story told in the monthly series began.

ECLIPSE COMICS

A major character will die in **Sabre #5**.

Eclipse's flagship title will be changed to a monthly, color, Baxter title with new numbering.

Eclipse Magazine will focus on five series. The Masked Man by B.C. Boyer, Ragamuffins by Don McGregor, and Trina Robbins' Dope series will be continued.

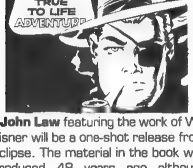
Steve Ditko will be writing and drawing a new series, Static, which will feature the adventures of a scientist in a suit which gives him electro-magnetic powers.

STATIC
© 82 S. DITKO

Marshall Rogers presents a fantasy series replete with dragons, dimension-spanning sneakers, and famous architectural monuments. The series will be called Cap'n Quick and the Foozle.

McGregor will create a second series to alternate with Ragamuffins.

Aztec Ace is the name of the new monthly comic book being prepared for Eclipse by Doug Moench. The book which will premiere this summer in Baxter format, features the adventures of a time traveller from the future who wages war through time and space. No artist has been chosen.



John Law featuring the work of Will Eisner will be a one-shot release from Eclipse. The material in the book was produced 48 years ago although never published. The book will contain three complete stories and be printed in full color on Baxter stock.

The second volume in the "Hall of Fame" series being produced by Eclipse will feature **The Art of Steve Ditko**. The book will be written by Mark S. Upchurch and will trace Ditko's career from his first published story through today. Heavily illustrated, the book will reproduce obscure artwork as well as several stories chosen for reprinting by Ditko himself. Also included will be a complete checklist. The book will be released in two editions, trade paperback and a hardcover edition containing a tipped-in color plate of a new piece of art by Steve Ditko and signed and numbered by the artist. This title is scheduled for a June release.

CHARLTON

SOAP OPERA LOVE #3 will be the last issue. It will be replaced by FIGHTIN' NAVY which will begin with issue #126.

FANTAGRAPHICS

Amazing Heroes is now biweekly. Both Assistant Editor Steve Riggenberg and Art Director Brian Boerner have left the staff. Bob Sodaro has been hired to replace Riggenberg.

People In The News

Howard Chaykin will pencil **Indiana Jones #5**.

Craig Russell will be pencilling a **Killraven Graphic Novel** for Marvel and a bi-monthly **Elric** series for Pacific.

Bob McLeod is no longer the penciller on the **New Mutants**.

Kevin Nowlan is now the regular penciller on **Moon Knight**.

Danny Fingeroth has left **Dazzler**.

Scott and Wade Hampton pencil and ink **Swamp Thing #14 and 15.**

Al Milgrom has given up his staff position at Marvel to concentrate on his writing and art.

Bob Budiansky is the newest marvel editor.

Lee Sapp is Carol Kalish's new assistant. She will act as fan and press liason. Lea formerly was Administrative Assistant to Jim Shooter. Margaret Clark has filled that position.

Steve Ditko's Mocker will appear in the second issue of **Silver Star**. This story was originally created for **Adventure Illustrated**.

John Bolton will be doing the cover and an eleven page story for **Twisted Tales**.

Mike Baron and Steve Rude, of **Nexus**, will be doing a series of black humor adventures of an encyclopedia salesman set in a burnt-out Bladerunner type of future.

Ellis Goodson is pencilling the Scythe series for **Mr. Tree**.

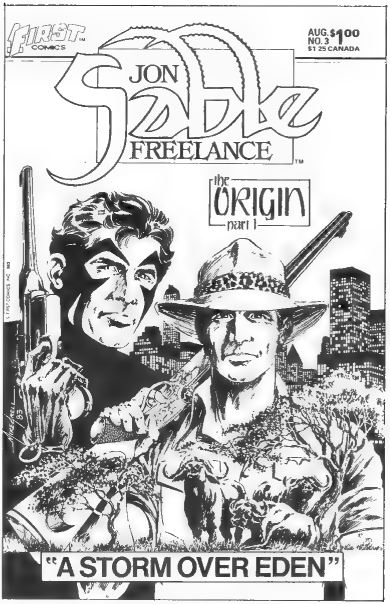
Klaus Janson will be the colorist for **John Law Comics**, the Will Eisner book to be released by Eclipse.

Animation News

ASIFA Hollywood will be sponsoring an exhibition of animated films to coincide with the 1984 Olymics that will feature new short films and animation artwork celebrating "The Spirit of the Olympics" and short films representing "The Best of Animation" from countries participating in the Olympic Games. This double exhibition will take place in Los Angeles in July of 1984 during the Olympics. The ASIFA/Hollywood Olympiad Committee will be chaired by Fini Littlejohn, with Bill Hurtz as co-chairperson.

A number of filmmakers have already begun work on the films. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will co-produce the event, and the films will be shown in the Academy's Samuel Goldwyn Theater as well as other selected theaters.

STARSLAYER is now being published by **FIRST COMICS**, with story by **Mike Grell**, and art by **Lenin Delsol**.



SABLE will be written and drawn by **Grell**

There will be a gala opening and a reception, and a three-day to one week exhibition of both films and artwork. Each film selected for showing will receive a Certificate of Participation; there will be prizes given in several categories to be awarded by a jury of animation professionals. There will also be awards based on the votes of the viewing public. For further details on this event [or if you are interested in participating in some form] contact ASIFA/Hollywood Olympiad Committee, 1258 N. Highland Ave. suite 102, Los Angeles, California, 90038.

WOODPECKER IN THE SMITHSONIAN

During November, animator Walter Lantz and his wife Grace turned over seventeen artifacts to the National Museum of American History which is part of the Smithsonian Institution. Among the items were a wooden model of Woody Woodpecker and a story board for Woody's first film appearance in the 1940 cartoon "Knock Knock". Museum official Douglass Evelyn edited Lantz with a "truly profaound accomplishment" in producing 400 six minute Woody cartoons. Grace Lantz has been the voice of Woody Woodpecker for thirty years. ASIFA/Hollywood is commissioning a series of limited edition animation cels devoted to the Lantz characters for sale to collectors. The "Gold Series" will come with certificates of authenticity and a limited number of them will be autographed by Lantz. Universay Studios Tour still features a special Walter Lantz exhibit and a large Woody Woodpecker balloon appeared in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. This is certainly starting out to be the year of the Woodpecker.

GALLERY LAINZBERG

There seems to be more and more dealers selling animation art. One of the nicest catalogs comes from a company in Iowa called Gallery Lainzberg. Besides cels from Disney cartoons, television animated specials and some animated features, the company has special limited edition animation cels from Chuck Jones and Friz Freleng depicting popular Warner Brothers characters. All artwork is custom matted in high quality double mats and there is a layaway plan for purchases. If you are interested in getting on their mailing list, send $2.00 for their colorful catalogs to Gallery Lainzberg, 417 Guaranty Bldg., Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401.

BITS AND PIECES

The upcoming Disney Channel pay-tv network is set to debut April 11. The service will feature sixteen hours a day of programs, ranging from "Mousercise" (a "Richard Simmons type program for the early set"), in the mornings to an experimental "Studio Showcase" in the late night hours. According to Jim Jimirro, president of Disney's telecommunications and non-theatrical division, the new $100 million channel will feature an even mix of original programs, shows acquired from outside producers and films and programs from Disney's own extensive library. Two of the new shows will be *Epcot Central*, a magazine type show, and *Epcot American Adventure*, a half hour upbeat news program...On Saturday morning, NBC is still topping the ratings although The Smurfs have dropped to #2 position behind the new Pac Man show on ABC. NBC has a 24 share, ABC has a 23 share and CBS is lagging behind with a 19 share...

Some of the animation for the new Marvel Productions' shows are being done by Toei Doga, a Japanese company...The Santa Barbara Comic Art Festival is trying to raise some money and has issued a limited edition art print that features artwork by folks like Rick Hoberg, Will Meugniot, Scott Shaw and others. For further information, write to D. Cooper, 7186 Del Norte Drive, Goleta, California 93117. [The Santa Barbara Cons have often invited animators to speak.]

HUGH HARMAN DIES

Over the Thanksgiving holidays, Hugh Herman died after a lengthy illness. Harman is perhaps best known for his work with Rudolph Ising at MGM where the two producers made a series of "Harman-Ising" cartoon-shorts that are still highly regarded today. Along with his brother, Fred Harman, who was later responsible for the "Red Ryder" comic strip, Hugh worked with Walt Disney back in Kansas City when Disney and Ub Iwerks were churning out "Laugh O Gram" cartoons. Later Harman and Ising made the first Warner Brothers animated cartoon in 1930. In 1933, Harman and Ising moved over to MGM where they turned out the "The Harmonies." One of the shorts, "Peace On Earth", was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. It was Herman's dream to transform that short into a feature and he devoted the last few years of his life trying to have that dream realized. Unfortunately, that dream died with him.

STRIP NEWS

Born, to Valiant, Prince of Thule, and Queen Aleta of the Misty Isles, a son, their fifth child. The royal babe has not yet been christened, because he was kidnapped shortly after his birth, by the order of Emperor Justinian of Constantinople.

The last Canyon story of 1982 is a partial reprint of a book on patriotism **See if Anyone Salutes**, written and illustrated several years ago by Milton Caniff.

The current Star Wars strip gives us our first look at one of the characters who will appear in the new movie, **Return of the Jedi**.

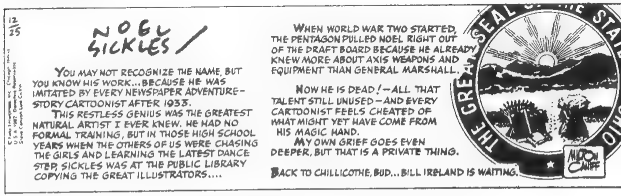
STEVE CANYON

By MILTON CANIFF

STEVE IS SPEAKING OF PATRIOTISM
"ENERGETIC YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THE WELLSPRING OF SINCERE UNQUESTIONING PATRIOTIC FERVOR...THE HITLER YOUTH ORGANIZATION WAS JUST THAT...
TO A COLLEGE GROUP
...SO WAS THE CHINESE RED GUARD.
"AND OF COURSE, THE SOVIET RED YOUTH LEGIONS ARE ACTIVE IN THIS AREA."
EVEN THE U.S. BOY AND GIRL SCOUT MOVEMENTS SEEM TO ECHO SIMILAR ATTITUDES. BUT THERE IS ONE BIG DIFFERENCE... AMERICAN KIDS CAN QUIT ANY TIME THEY CHOOSE!!

STEVE CANYON

By MILTON CANIFF


12/25
NOEL SICKLES/
YOU MAY NOT RECOGNIZE THE NAME, BUT YOU KNOW HIS WORK...BECAUSE HE WAS IMITATED BY EVERY NEWSPAPER ADVENTURE-STORY CARTOONIST AFTER 1933.
THIS RESTLESS GENIUS WAS THE GREATEST NATURAL ARTIST I EVER KNEW. HE HAD NO FORMAL TRAINING, BUT IN THOSE HIGH SCHOOL YEARS WHEN THE OTHERS OF US WERE CHASING THE GIRLS AND LEARNING THE LATEST DANCE STEP, SICKLES WAS AT THE PUBLIC LIBRARY COPYING THE GREAT ILLUSTRATORS....
WHEN WORLD WAR TWO STARTED, THE PENTAGON PILLED NOEL RIGHT OUT OF THE DRAFT BOARD BECAUSE HE ALREADY KNEW MORE ABOUT AXIS WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT THAN GENERAL MARSHALL.
NOW HE IS DEAD!—ALL THAT TALENT STILL UNUSED—AND EVERY CARTOONIST FEELS CHEATED OF WHAT MIGHT YET HAVE COME FROM HIS MAGIC HAND.
MY OWN GRIEF GOES EVEN DEEPER, BUT THAT IS A PRIVATE THING.
BACK TO CHILLICOTHE, BUD...BILL IRELAND IS WAITING.
MILTON CANIFF

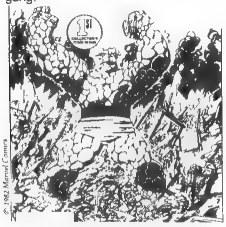
Milton Caniff's tribute to one of comic art's lost masters

LISTINGS

MARVEL

Shipping March 1

THE THING #1 - Written by John Byrne, Pencils by Ron Wilson. The first issue gets off to an explosive start as Ben Grimm is forced to confront his own troubled, never-before-revealed past as he faces a youth gang.



DAZZLER #27 - Written and pencilled by Frank Springer, inks by Vince Colletta. Alison Blaire and her sister are on the run across country, fleeing from a murder her sister believes she has committed as a result of her mutant power.

KA-ZAR #27 - Written by Bruce Jones, Pencils and inks by Armando Gil. Back in the Savage Land, Ka-Zar and Shanna's only hope of survival lays in the hands of Buth and the advanced science of Aerie-Shalahn.

DAREDEVIL #196 - Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils by Klaus Janson. Guest-starring Wolverine!

NEW MUTANTS #5 - Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by Sal Buscema. Sunspot's mother, a world famous archeologist, disappears in the headwaters of the Amazon, and Roberto insists that the New mutants search for her.

KING CONAN #17 - Written by Alan Zelenetz, breakdowns by John Buscema, finishes by Rudy Nebres. With grave doubts as to his father's capability of leadership, Conn goes on a personal adyssey to discover the value of kings.

Shipping March 8

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #242 - Written by Roger Stern, pencils by John Romita, Jr. Lance Bannon and Peter Parker have a heated confrontation over Amy Powell. The return of a female from the past. The Black Cat in the hospital. And the Mad Thinker and his super-powered android.

CAPTAIN AMERICA #283 -J.D. DeMatteis (writer), Mike Zeck (penciller), and John Beatty (inker) bring the conclusion to the Viper/Nomad trilogy.

THOR #333 - Written by Alan Zelenetz, pencils by Bob Hall. The final showdown between the God of Thunder and the Lord of Vampires as Thor battles Dracula in a contest of weather-commanding ability.

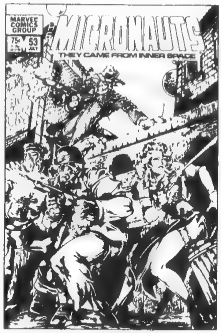
CRYSTAR #2 - Written by Mary Jo Duffy, pencils by Bret Blevins, inks by Vince Colletta. Introducing the newest member of the Crystal people —Ika, the daughter of the wizard Ogeode.

MOON KNIGHT #32 - Written by Doug Moench, pencils by Kevin Nowlan.

INDIANA JONES #7 - Written by David Micheline, pencils by Ron Frenz.

KULL THE CONQUEROR #2 - Written by Alan Zelenetz, pencils by John Buscema, inks by Dan Green. Kull is forced to leave when Tu is critically injured and Kull must seek out an herb that may be the dying man's last chance. But in doing so he encounters a race of bird people.

U.S. 1 #3 - Written by Al Milgrom, pencils by Herb Trimpe. U.S. and company face the woman known as Midnight.



MICRONAUTS #53 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils and inks by Butch Guice. Commander Rann's band face danger, gangland style, as they find themselves on a prison world planet resembling earth where the only form of law and order is "The Untouchables."

Shipping March 15

INCREDIBLE HULK #285-Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Joe Sinnott. "Today is the First Day of the Rest of My Life," declares Dr. Bruce Banner, who designs and builds a research complex called Northwind in order to pursue his long sidetracked goal - being a scientist.

AVENGERS #233 - Written by Roger Stern, pencils by Al Milgrom. In a crossover with **Fantastic Four #256**, the Avengers battle to save the world from the threat of Annihilus.

CONAN THE BARBARIAN #168 - Written by Bruce Jones, pencils by John Buscema, inks by Ernie Chan. A tribe fighting for survival in a wasteland; a forbidden fruit; a strange curse and a bizarre metamorphosis all add up to the "Plague of Forlek."

MARVEL TALES #153 - Reprinting from **Spider-Man #15** the web-slinger's first encounter with "Kraven the Hunter."

X-MEN #171 - Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by Paul Smith, inks by Bob Wiacek. Rogue joins the X-Men and Carol Danvers (now the Binary) finds out about it.

POWER MAN/IRON FIST #95 - Written by Kurt Busiek, pencils by Denys Cowan. Danny and Luke get involved with a house party being ripped off by criminals who are more than what they seem - they have a deeper, darker purpose that will affect the life of Danny Rand.

G.I. JOE #13 - Written by Larry Hama, pencils by Mike Vosburg. Snake-Eyes finds himself trapped in a bunker underneath a river in South America.

RED SONJA #1 - Written by Tom DeFalco, pencils by Dave Simons, inks by Nestor Redondo. "While Lovers Embrace, Demons Feed." While trapped in the middle of a town's economic war with a wizard, Sonja comes upon a medallion that protects her from all harm.

ROM #44 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Ian Akin and Brian Garvey. Rom and Star-Shine meet up with the Gremlin, who offers hope for the dying Rom-turned-human. But all is threatened by the arrival of the Devastator and the Soviet Super Soldiers.

Shipping March 22

FANTASTIC FOUR #256 - John Byrne. **FF** face their final battle with the lord of the Negative Zone, Annihilus.

MARVEL TEAM-UP #131-Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by Kerry Gammill, inks by Mike Esposito.

IRON MAN #172 - Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils by Luke McDonnell, inks by Steve Mitchell. The new Iron Man faces a test of whether or not he can cut it as a substitute.

PETER PARKER #80 - Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Al Milgrom, inks by Jim Mooney. The Punisher, Boomerang, and the return of Cloak & Dagger.

DEFENDERS #121 - Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by Don Perlin. The Defenders are put in a bizarre position in "Savior" as, on an Indonesian island, they fight to stop the all-powerful Miracle Man from...saving the world? Also: a major turning point in the lives of Dalmon Hellstrom and Patsy Walker.

STAR WARS #73 - Written by David Michelinie, pencils by Bob Layton. A flashback sequence involving an old friend of Luke's from the planet of ice, Hoth.

THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE #7 - Covering the M's from the Mandarin to Mystique.

FROM THE EPIC LINE

EPIC ILLUSTRATED #18-(Shipping 3/15) cover by Jim Steranko kicks off an issue featuring "Tail Gunner" by Mary Jo Duffy and Kent Williams, "Garbage Scow" by Bob Hall, and "The Demon" by Japanese animator Go Nagai (of "Starvenger's" fame).

DREADSTAR #4 - (Shipping 3/22) Jim Starlin. Dedi and Skeevo take center stage this time.

MARVEL MAGAZINES:

FIRE AND ICE: MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL #25 - (Shipping 3/15) Written by Denny O'Neil. Art reproduced directly from the cels of this Ralph Bakshi/Frank Frazetta animated film. A saga of sword and sorcery as the evil King Nekron's plot to cover the entire planet with ice is fought by one lone enclave of warmth—Firekeep—as Firekeep's ruler sends his greatest warriors, including the mysterious Darkwolf and Princess Tigra, to do battle.

BAZARRE ADVENTURES #35 - (Shipping 3/15) Strange Pets, including a pet mountain and a strange pet kept by a group of suburban matrons for special occasions.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #89 (Shipping 3/8) Written by Michael Reischer, pencils and inks by Alfredo Alcala. Conan becomes involved with two wealthy brothers, gamblers, who want him to rescue their sister from the "Slave Marts of Asgalum."

BLIP #4 - (Shipping 3/22)

MARVEL AGE #4 - (Shipping 3/15)

FANFARE #9 - (Shipping 3/15) Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by J.J. Brozowski, inks by Gray Morrow. The Man Thing faces a bizarre deal which could restore his humanity but cost him his soul in "Rock and Soul."

DC

SHIPPING MARCH 15TH

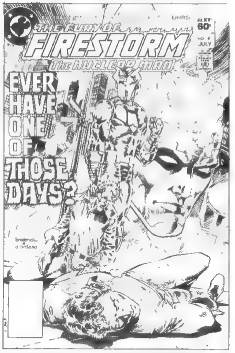
THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #218 - Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by Don Heck, inks by Romeo Tanghal,, cover by George Perez. The JLA and the Siren Sisterhood quest for the staff of Ikara. Plus-the debut of the newest member of the Siren Sisterhood.

WONDER WOMAN #305 - Story by Dan Mishkin, pencils by Gene Colan, inks by Frank McLaughlin. Plans for a pleasant day's picnic are wrecked by an invasion far deadlier than ants. Dr. Tarr and Professor Fether.

ARAK, SON OF THUNDER #23 - Story by Roy and Danette Thomas, pencils by Adrian Gonzales, inks by Alfredo Alcala. What is the solution to the riddle of Gog and Magog? To discover it, the Son of Thunder must face the demon Delphegor.

BLACKHAWK #260 - An anthology by writer Mark Evanier and John Severin, Pat Boyette and Doug Wildey. Dan Spiegle rounds out the issue with a small framing sequence.

DC COMICS PRESENTS #59 - Story by Keith Giffen with a dialogue assist by Paul Levitz. Pencils by Keith Giffen. Cover by Keith and Mike DeCarlo. "Ambush II – or – Just When You Thought It Was Safe to Read DC Comics Presents Again!" and The Legion of Substitute-Heroes.



THE FURY OF FIRESTORM #14 - Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by Pat Broderick, inks by Rodin Rodriguez. Cover by Broderick and Dick Giordano. What does a nuclear physicist do for a living when he's canned? Why, he gets a job at the Bun & Bun, of course ...provided he's bright enough to keep it. What's worse, neither Professor Stein nor Ronnie Raymond can become Firestorm – and Multiplex is back.

ADVENTURE COMICS DIGEST #501 - More classic tales of The Legion of Super-Heroes. Also featuring The Plastic Man, Shazam!, Spectre, The Rey, Aquaman and two Sherman/Abel Legion pinups.

THE BEST OF DC DIGEST #38 - Superman versus the supernatural. Reprints of the Man of Steel's battles with socerous foes and magical menaces.

AMETHYST, PRINCESS OF GEMWORLD #3 - Story by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn, art and cover by Ernie Colon. Something's happening all over Gemworld. Granch begins an adventure, Citrina finds herself in deadly danger, and Dark Opal plots Amethyst's capture.

SHIPPING MARCH 22ND

BATMAN #361 - Story by Doug Moench, pencils by Don Newton, inks by Alfredo Alcala. Cover by Ed Hannigan and Dick Giordano. Man-Bat is back.

He kidnaps Jason Todd, the Darknight Detective's new sidekick.

G.I. COMBAT #255 - "Dead Letter Office" is the lead Haunted Tank story, written by Robert Kanigher, drawn by Sam Glanzman.

THE FLASH #323 - Story by Cary Bates, pencils by Carmine Infantino, inks by Dennis Jensen. Fiona's at the alter – but where's Barry? Locked in a life-or-death battle with Reverse-Flash – and only one will live. The Creeper also stars in another bizarre adventure written by Carl Gafford and drawn by Chuck Patton.

SUPERMAN #385 - Story by Cary Bates, pencils by Curt Swan, inks by Dave Hunt.

THE NEW TEEN TITANS #33 - Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by George Perez, inks by Romeo Tanghal. Cover by Perez. Introducing a new villain – Trident. Plus, the groundwork is laid for next issue's explosive death.

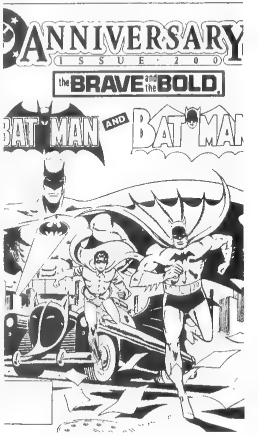
THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING #15 - "Empires Made of Sand" is the conclusion to the two-parter by writer Dan Mishkin and artists Scott and Wade Hampton. Swamp Thing and The Phantom Stranger have both fallen prey to the crystal touch.

THE OMEGA MEN #4 - Story by Roger Slifer, art by Keith Giffen and Mike DeCarlo. "Mutiny!" A duel for the leadership of The Omega Men.

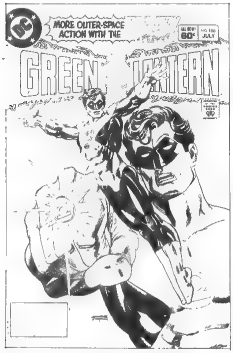
DC COMICS PRESENTS ANNUAL #2 - Story by Elliot S. Maggin, pencils by Keith Pollard. Superwoman.

SHIPPING MARCH 29TH

THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD #200 - By Mike W. Barr and Dave Gibbons, co-starring the greatest



detectives of two worlds: Batman, Brimstone, hailing from Earth-2, unites these two heroes for it is he who seeks revenge by making Gotham City a living hell. This is an anniversary issue, 64 pages on 37# Mando stock. Plus: Batman and the Outsiders. Jim Aparo cover.



GREEN LANTERN #166 - Joey Cavalieri and Keith Pollard. Plus: two Tales of the Green Lantern Corps.

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #318 - Story by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn, art by Paris Cullins and Tom Sutton. Cover by Mike Kaluta.

SGT. ROCK #378 - Story by Robert Kanigher, art by Frank Redondo. Cover by Joe Kubert. It's "Christmas In July" for Easy.

THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #301 - Story by Paul Levitz, pencils by Keith Giffen, inks by Larry Mahlstedt. "Different Paths, Different Dooms" is the story of Chameleon Boy and his father, R.J. Brande. Trapped on Durla and branded as traitors, they await their fate.

THE DARING NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERGIRL #10 - Story by Paul Kupperberg, pencils by Carmine Infantino, inks by Bob Oksner. The Maid of Might and The New Doom Patrol vs. Reactron, The Living Nuclear Reactor. And Joey Cavalier joines with Bob Oksner on the Lois Lane story.

WARLORD #71

THE NIGHT FORCE #12 - Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by Gene Colan, inks by Bob Smith. A 1930s psychic detective story starring Baron Winters and Vanessa Van Helsing.

SHIPPING APRIL 5TH

ACTION COMICS #545 - Story by Marv Wolfman, art by Gil Kane.

DETECTIVE COMICS #528 - Story by Doug Moench, pencils by Dan Day, inks by Dick Giordano. Plus: Green Arrow against Ozone, in a story written by Joey Cavalieri.

JONAH HEX #74 - Story by Michael Fleisher, pencils by Dick Ayers, inks by Tony DeZuniga. "The Bloody Saga of Railroad Bill." Jonah must track down and capture Railroad Bill – only once he does, the bounty hunter discovers an admiration for Railroad Bill.

WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #293

ALL-STAR SQUADRON - Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Jerry Ordway, inks by Mike Machlan. The introduction of Amazing-Man. Plus: the return of Dr. Fate's sorcerous might. And – an Amazing-Man origin story by writer Roy Thomas, penciller Rick Hoberg, and embellisher Jerry Ordway.

ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS #9 - Story by Doug Moench, art by Jan

Duurseme. D'Tilluh returns to the city, but the Atlanteans want Arion to be their king.

CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS AMAZING ZOO CREW! #17 - The private lives of the Zoo Crew. Roy Thomas, John Constanza and Rick Hoberg. Writers Scott Shaw and Jim Engel.

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY #43 - Story by Paul Kupperberg, art by Kurt Schaffenberger. The Boy of Steel must stop Dyna-Mind, "The Forty-Hour Wonder!" Plus: Dial H For Hero, by E. Nelson Bridwell and Bob Rozakis, writers and Howard Bender, penciller.

GREEN ARROW MINI-SERIES #3 Story by Mike W. Barr, pencils by Trevor Bon Eeden, inks by Dick Giordano.

RONIN (Book One) - Written, pencilled and inked by Frank Miller. Each page is lush with spectacle, every single panel overflows with vivid action – and you'll see it in the format designed to enhance the power of Frank's work. Each issue will be 48 pages with a wraparound cover. There will be no advertising. The paper used will beautifully complement the work of one of comicdom's premier craftsmen.

MARVEL

SHIPPING APRIL 5

THE THING #2—Written by John Byrne, Pencils by Ron Wilson. Someone Ben Grimm never expected to see again returns as he confronts a woman from his past.

DAREDEVIL #197—Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils and inks by Klaus Janson. Will Bullseye recover, enabling him to threaten once again those that Daredevil holds dear? Will Daredevil stop him? And...should he?

about that group.

INCREDIBLE HULK ANNUAL #12—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Herb Trimpe. The Hulk is brought to act as a champion for one of the two sides on a planet populated by green-skinned people and orange-skinned people, living in eternal conflict.

SHIPPING APRIL 12

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #243—Written by Roger Stern, pencils by John Romita, Jr., inks by Dan Green. The return of Mary Jane Watson. Peter Parker learns how he did on exams and then makes a decision that will forever affect his career as he weighs his "Options."

THE NEW MUTANTS #6—Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by Sal Buscema, Inks by Bob McLeod. The New Mutants are attending a benefit when abruptly everything happens at once—Hydra attacks! Dani disappears! The Silver Samurai strikes! And roaring forth comes—

CAPTAIN AMERICA #240—Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by Sal Buscema. Destinies are "Diverging" as Cap and Bernie face a turning point in their relation while the Nomad seeks his future.

THOR #334—Written by Alan Zelenetz, pencils by Ron Wilson, inks by Vince Colletta. Beginning Thor's quest for the Rune Staff that will free Jane Foster from her imprisonment in the body of Sif.

INDIANA JONES #8—Written by David Michelinie, pencils by Kerry Gammill, inks by Sam De La Rosa. Indy and Marion search for the lost continent of Atlantis.

U.S. 1 #4—Written by Al Milgrom, pencils by Herb Trimpe. Baron Von Blimp challenges the trucker to a showdown of Dirigible Power versus Truck Power.

DR. STRANGE #80—Written by Roger Stern, pencils by Dan Green, inks by Terry Austin. Master of the Mystic Scarlet Witch versus Dracula.

SHIPPING APRIL 19

INCREDIBLE HULK #288—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema. The Hulk makes the longest leap of his life—into the future, where he lands on a planet that is populated by a race dedicated to eternal conflict. In a place where the only way of life is death, Green Skin can only become a "Soldier."

AVENGERS #234—Written by Roger Stern, pencils by Al Milgrom, inks by Joe Sinnott. A sequel to **Vision/Scarlet Witch #4** and a tie-in with **Dr. Strange #80** as the Scarlet Witch comes to town to look after her husband, seriously wounded after his battle with Annihilus last ish.

CONAN #148—Written by Bruce Jones, breakdowns by John Buscema, inks Ernie Chan. Conan faces a truly disarming opponent—a monster with the tendency to rend his victims limb

from limb.

MARVEL TALES #154—Historic early meeting from **Spider-Man #16** as the webhead must "Duel with Daredevil" while the Ringmaster and his circus of crime cheers them on.

ROM #45—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Ian Akin and Brian Garvey. It's time to "Cry the Mother Country" as, in the heart of the Soviet Union itself, the Spaceknight battles Vanguard, Darkstar, and the entire squadron of the Soviet Super Soldiers.

G.I. JOE #14—Written by Larry Hama, pencils by Mike Vosburg, inks by Jon D'Agostino. the Joes are under fire when Destro attacks—Destro, the master tactician of Hydra.

THE UNCANNY X-MEN #172—Written by Chris Claremont, pencils by Paul Smith. In Japan for Wolverine and Mariko's wedding, the X-Men find themselves in the crossfire of a brutal power struggle. It seems that the Silver Samurai is determined to take over the criminal empire left open with the death of Mariko's father, even if it means obtaining it over Mariko's dead body.

POWER MAN/IRON FIST #86—Written by Kurt Busiek, pencils by William Johnson. What Times Square *really* needs is not a Hero-for-Hire, but someone to protect the *criminals*. And that is just what Chemistro intends to provide, just as soon as he gets rid of one stumbling block—Luke Cage.

SHIPPING APRIL 26

MARVEL TEAM UP #132—Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by Sal Buscema, inks by Mike Esposito. What is "The Common Denominator" and how does it figure into the scheme of the new and improved Everyman?

IRON MAN #173—Written by Denny O'Neil, pencils by Luke McDonnell, inks by Steve Mitchell. Stark International becomes Stane International as Obidiah Stane, the man who drove Tony Stark to drink, finalizes his triumph and takes over Stark's beloved business.

STAR WARS #74—Written by David Micheline, pencils by Luke McDonnell, inks by Bob Layton. A flashback sequence involving an old friend of Luke's from the planet of ice, Hoth.

FANTASTIC FOUR #257—Written and drawn by John Byrne. Only one mortal in the past has ever defeated Galactus, and that is the FF's

leader, Mr. Fantastic. But the world devourer has returned, and this time Reed Richards is nowhere to be found!

DEFENDERS #122—Written by J.M. DeMatteis, pencils by Don Perlin. The Iceman joins Hellcat and the Son of Satan leaves.

PETER PARKER #81—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Al Milgrom, inks by Jim Mooney. Part two of the struggle between the Punisher and Cloak and Dagger. The Punisher must then battle the Kingpin to a brutal conclusion.

THE OFFICIAL HANDBOOK OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE #8—Namorita to Pyro, featuring Frank Miller's Punisher, John Byrne's

WHEN THE MODERN-DAY SORCERER DOCTOR STRANGE AND HIS BUSINESS MANAGER SARA WOLFE CAME TO THE DAKOTA APARTMENTS, THEY NEVER EXPECTED TO MEET A VAMPIRE...
MUCH LESS A RELUCTANT VAMPIRE SUCH AS PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR MANNIBAL KING. NOR WERE THEY PREPARED FOR THE NEWS HE GAVE THEM...
HE'S OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. I CAN ALMOST FEEL IT.
...DRACULA
© 1982 Marvel Comics

Northstar, and Walt Simonson's Odin.

ALPHA FLIGHT #1—A John Byrne production. The debut of Marvel's Canadian mutant team as Alpha Flight is forced to decide what the future holds for them, but not before battling the man-mountain called Tundra. 48-page introduction.

WHAT IF #40—Written by Peter Gillis, pencils by Butch Guice. Try to imagine "What if Dr. Strange had never been Master of the Mystic Arts," a world where the supreme magic power is wielded by Strange's arch enemy, Baron Mordo.

FROM THE EPIC LINE:

SHIPPING APRIL 26

COYOTE #2—Written by Steve Englehart, pencilled and inked by Steve Leialoha. The rest of the origin

WERE-ANIMAL -- COME ME HERE TO --?
IF I'M A WERE-ANIMAL, WHY ARE WE TALKING INSTEAD OF DREAMING?
I DON'T KNOW...
HARD TO KNOW THINGS, OTHER PEOPLE'S DRUGS IN YOUR BRAIN -- eh, BOY?

of Coyote, and the secret of Cassie and NaTalia. Also, Coyote's showdown with the creature in the trailer.

MARVEL MAGAZINES:

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #90—[Shipping 4/12] Written by Michael Feischer, breakdowns by John Buscema, finishes by Nestor Redondo. There's a city under seige, and a highly superstitious Cimmerian is needed to take on an evil king who has harnessed the forces of the Underworld to keep a city captive.

RETURN OF THE JEDI—MARVEL SUPER SPECIAL #26—[Shipping 4/12] Written by Archie Goodwin, pencils by Al Williamson, inks by Carlos Garzon. The battle to rescue Han Solo and the new confrontation between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader.

DC

SHIPPING APRIL 12TH

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA #217—Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by newcomer Chuck Patton, inks by Romeo Tanghal. The return of the Vixen.

WONDER WOMAN #306—Story by Dan Mishkn, art by Don Heck. Don Heck becomes the Amazing Amazon's artist. Wonder Women is shocked when Steve Trevor shows no interest in the assassination attempts on Diana's landlord, ex-Sen. Abernathy ... and begins to question her relationship with him. The Huntress is written by Joey Cavalieri and drawn by Mike Hernandez. Cover by Gil Kane.

ARAK, SON OF THUNDER #24—Story by Roy and Danette Thomas, pencils by Adrian Gonzales, inks by Alfredo Alcala. Dollar-sized issue with the end to the quest for Melagigi. The final battle between Gog and Magog. Plus: a map of the Son of Thunder's adventures (so far) and pin-ups by Ernie Colon, Alfredo Alcala, and Adrian Gonzales.

BLACKHAWK #261—"The Domino Theory." Story by Mark Evanier, art by Dan Spiegle. Cover by Dave Cockrum. Blackhawk seeks to prevent the Domino from murdering allied Generals ... and the rest of the band contends with the renewed War Wheel.

DC COMICS PRESENTS #60—Cary Burkett, story; Irv Novick and Tony De Zuniga, art. The Man of Steel and The Guardians of the Universe in their first team up.

THE FURY OF FIRESTORM #15—Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by Pat Broderick, inks by Rodin Rodriguez. Cover by Broderick and Dick Giordeno. The return of Multiplex. Firestorm's most hated foe has kidnapped Professor Stein and Lorraine Reilly.

ADVENTURE COMICS DIGEST #502—Now Dream Girl leads the Legion of Super-Heroes--but how did she fist meet the 30th century's teenaged heroes? Find out in "The Menace of Dream Girl," one of two Legion reprints.

THE BEST OF DC DIGEST #39—Featuring Binky.

AMETHYST, PRINCESS OF GEMWORLD #4—Story by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn, art by Ernie Colon. Citrine is in the clutches of the Dark Opal.

CAMELOT 3000 #8—Story by Mike W. Barr. Pencils and cover by Brian Bolland. Which knight would betray the Table Round after more than two millennia? What reward could tempt the ... "Judas Knight"?

SGT. ROCK ANNUAL #3—Story by Robert Kanigher, art by Dan Spiegle. Cover by Joe Kubert.

SHIPPING APRIL 19TH

BATMAN #361—Story by Doug Moench, pencils by Don Neton. **MAN-BAT** is back, seeking revenge.

FLASH #323—Story by Gary Bates, pencils by Carmine Infantino. Cover by Infantino and Rodin Rodriguez. A study in contrast: Fiona waits at the alter for Barry Allen, while he fights to prevent Reverse Flash from murdering her. To stop Reverse Flash, The Flash himself must kill. The start of a year-long story.

G.I. COMBAT #256—Cover by Joe Kubert. The Haunted Tank feature is "Some Generals Never Learn," the lament of the ghostly General Stuart. Story by Robert Kanigher. Also: Lt. Stuart's crew fights the battle of "Tank vs. Tiger." Plus: international peril with the Mercenaries.

SUPERMAN #386—Story by Cary Bates, pecils by Curt Swan, inks by Dave Hunt.

THE NEW TEEN TITANS #34—Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by George Perez, inks by Romeo Tanghal. District Attorney Adrian Chase has lived his life fighting the forces of evil – and occasionally, the methods employed by the Titans. Now his life ends in explosive fashion when his family's home is bombed – and the Titans must dead with his murderers.

THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING #16—Story by Martin Pasko, pencils by Steve Bissette, inks by John Totleben. Bissette and Totleben become the regular art team on The Swamp Thing's adventures.

THE OMEGA MEN #5—Story by Roger Slifer, art by Keith Giffen and Mike De Carlo. The Omega Men fight their way across the Vegan star system as they begin an assault on the citadel.

THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA ANNUAL #1—Story by Paul Levitz, pencils by Rick Hoberg. Dr. Destiny fights the members of the Justice League.

SHIPPING APRIL 26TH

GREEN LANTERN #167—Story by Joey Cavalieri. The conclusion to the three-part War of the Rings. Also featuring another Tales of the Green Lantern Corps by writer Todd Klein and artist Dave Gibbons.

HOUSE OF MYSTERY #319—Cover by Mike Kaluta. Story by Dan Mishkin and Gery Cohn, art by Tom Sutton. "Rigor Mortis" concludes the I ... VAMPIRE series.

SGT. ROCK #378—Story by Robert Kanigher, art by Frank Redondo. Cover by Joe Kubert.

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #302—Story by Paul Levitz, art by Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt. "Family Matters." Lightning Lord demands to see his sister Light Lass –but brother Lightning Lad vows instead to imprison him.

THE DARING NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERGIRL #10—Story by Paul Kupperberg, pencils by Carmine Infantino, inks by Bob Oksner. Joey Cavalieri writes and Bob Oksner draws a tale of Lois Lane.

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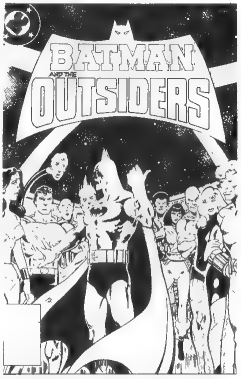
WARLORD #72—Dan Jurgens, penciller, and Bob Smith inker.

THE NIGHT FORCE #13—Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by Gene Colan, inks by Bob Smith. What is the conclusion to the 1930s psychic detective drama featuring Baron Winters and Vanessa Van Helsing?



BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS #1—Story by Mike W. Barr and art by Jim Aparo, who also drew the cover. The debut of a new DC title. After last month's brief introduction in **The Brave and the Bold**, learn who The Outsiders are and why The Batman brought them together. The story begins in the penthouse apartment of Bruce Wayne and continues half a world away on the bloody battlefields of a small European monarchy in the throes of revolution.

SHIPPING MAY 3RD

ACTION COMICS #546—Story by

Marv Wolfman, art by Gil Kane. Superman versus Brainiac.

DETECTIVE COMICS #529—Story by Doug Moench. Pencils by Gene Colan.

JONAH HEX #75—Mike Fleisher, story; Dick Ayers, pencils; Tony De Zuniga, inks. "The Bloody Saga of Railroad Bill, Part 2." Plus: The New El Diablo by Dohr and Randall.

WORLD'S FINEST COMICS #294—Story by Dave Kellogg, pencils by Jerome Moore. Cover pencilled by Ed Hannigan. Character developments continue for the World's Finest Team –and so do the threats, for now begins the menace of TONATIUM, with space age technology and Aztec mystery at his command.

ALL-STAR SQUADRON #24—Cover by Jerry Ordway. Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Jerry Ordway, inks by Mike Machlan. Ultra is threatening the U.S. with atomic disaster unless her brain is transplanted into Robot-man's body. Tarantula stars in a gripping solo story co-starring the son of Brain Wave.

ARION, LORD OF ATLANTIS #10—Story by Doug Moench, art and cover by Jan Duursema.

CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS AMAZING ZOO CREW! #18—Plot by Scott Shaw!, dialogue by Roy Thomas, pencils by new regular artist Rick Hoberg. Rick also pencilled and inked the cover.

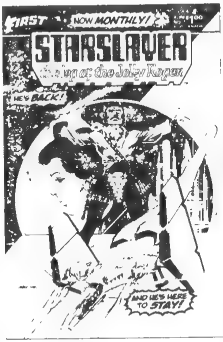
THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY #44—Story by Paul Kupperberg, art by Kurt Schaffenberger. After reverting to normal what possible menace could Dyna Mind be? If you think none, wait 'til you read "The Traps That Are In My Mind!" Plus – writers E. Nelson Bridwell and Bob Rozakis and penciller Howard Bender deliver a new "Dial H for Hero" story.

GREEN ARROW MINI-SERIES #4—Story by Mike W. Barr, pencils by Trevor Von Eeden, inks by Dick Giordano.

THE NEW TEEN TITANS ANNUAL #2—Story by Marv Wolfman, art by George Perez and Romeo Tanghal. A mysterious crime-fighter whose tactics assail even the Titans.

FIRST

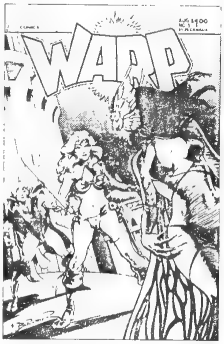
STARSLAYER #7 - Cover by Mike Grell. "A Case of Do Or Die!" written and broken down by Mike Grell, pencilled by Lenin Delsol, inked by Al Gordon.



E-MAN #5 - Cover by Joe Staton. "Getting Void," written by Martin Pasdo, drawn by Joe Staton. "Omaha, the Cat Dancer" by Reed Waller.

JON SABLE, FREELANCE #3 - Cover by Mike Grell. "A Storm Over Eden; the Origin, Part 1," written, pencilled and inked by Mike Grell.

Warp #5 - Covery by Frank Brunner. "The Darkest Hour!" adapted and pencilled by Frank Brunner, written by Peter Gillis, inked by Bruce Patterson. "The Dogs of War, Capter 1: Brawl!" written by John Ostrander, pencilled by Lenin Delsol, inked by Al Gordon.



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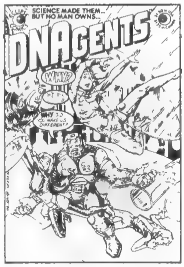


DNAgents 2 - (April 4th) Baxter.

DESTROYER DUCK 3 - (April 11th) Alfredo Alcala inks, Jack Kirby pencils, a Steve Gerber script. Plus, The Starling by Jerry Siegel and Val Mayerik. Baxter.

MS. TREE 2 - (April 5) Ms. Tree's previously appeared in **Eclipse Magazine**. The back-up is Dean Mullaney's costumed detective, the Scythe. Plus, Frank Miller's Famous Detective Pin-Up no. 2: Philip Marlow. (Previously scheduled as **Thrilling Detective**.)

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

Cerebus #48 - B & W.

COMICO

Comico Primer #3 - B & W.
Az #2 - B & W.
Slaughterman #2 - B & W.

AMERICOMICS

BlackDiamond #2 - This is the new "good girl" comic from Americomics. The art is by Don Secreese (pencils) and Rick Burchett (inks). Black Diamond is an international adventurer.

QUALITY

Warrior Magazine #9 - A. Davis, G. Leach, S. Parkhouse, D. Lloyd, D. Jackson, introduces a new character in Marvelman, Big Ben. B & W.

RAW

Raw #5 - Features include: 24 page "Maus" installment by Spiegelman bound-in, Raw comics supplement - a full-color "Sunday funnies" style newsprint insert featuring strips by Jay Lynch, Joost Swarte, Carol Lay, Tardi, Spiegelman, Kim Dietch, others. There is also an 8-page full-color 1940s comic reprint, Stardust. An 8-page Tardi strip, 12-page feature story by Pascal Doury. B & W.

KITCHEN

Spirit #39 - B & W.

21st CENTURY

HEAVY METAL May 1983.

Vortex #2 - Illustrates new work by Ken Steacy, Paul Rivoche, David Ross and Joe Haidar. B & W.

Voyages #1 - Frank Brunner cover, a 20-page "Bravo For Adventure" story by Alex Toth, an 8-pager by Trina, an interview with P. Craig Russell (3 pages), and a four-page color section by Howard Chaykin. B & W.

PACIFIC

ELRIC OF MELNIBONE #2 - (April 14th) Roy Thomas, P. Craig Russel, Michael T. Gilbert. Michael Moorcock's Wizard King. Baxter. **—$1.50**

GROO THE WANDERER #4 - (April 21st) Sergio Aragones' Groo needs a dose of mumbo-jumbo, in this issue, so he visits the old witch. **—$1.00**

CAPTAIN VICTORY #11 - (April 14th) Jack Kirby. Origin issue. Tim Conrad returns with a spectacular ten-page back-up feature, "Off on a Comet."

BERNIE WRIGHTSON: MASTER OF THE MACABRE - (April 7th) These stories originally appeared in Warren magazines and have been colored by Steve Oliff for full-process separation in comic size include "The Pepper Lake Monster," "The muck Monster," and Poe's "The Black Cat." Baxter.

ARCHIE

April 5 Shipping
Archie #324
Laugh #378
April 12 Shipping
Laugh Comics Digest #47
Jughead With Archie Digest #57
April 19 Shipping
Life With Archie #237
Betty & Me #134
April 26 Shipping
Archie's Double Digest Quarterly #7

RED CIRCLE

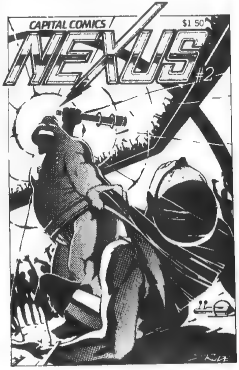
March/April

The Shield #1 - New revival of this patriotic hero. The new story is by Rich Buckler & Stan Timmons, artwork by Alan Weiss (pencils) and Sam De La Rosa (inks) the back-up is a Steel Sterling story by Adrian Gonzalez. Front cover by Weiss.

The Black Hood #1 - This is another new revival, which features a new 18-page lead feature by Gray Morrow. The back-up feature is "The Fox" illustrated by Tony De Zuniga. Front cover by Alex Toth, and back cover by Gray Morrow.

CAPITAL

Color Nexus #2 - Nexus, Tyrone and Dave confront the nefarious slave-trader, Cleusius, and his powerful henchman, Bellows. Bellows nearly destroys Nexus in a massive battle that builds to an exciting finish. Meanwhile, unveknownst to Nexus, Sundra Peale is kidnapped and taken to Earth to face charges of treason. Mike Baron - writer, Steve Rude - artist, and George Freeman - colors. Wrap-around cover by Steve Rude on 70 lb sterling with gloss.



Feature News Preview

THE FUTURE OF MARVEL

A TALK WITH THE MARVEL EDITORS

BUDIANSKY

CF: Let's start with the books each of you has out.

Budiansky: The first thing I should point out is that I don't have any regularly scheduled titles like the other editors. No monthly titles. I do have a list of some projects. A lot of these are still in the most preliminary planning stages, but they are things we will be doing. We'll be doing an X-Men/Micronauts mini-series, with Chris Claremont and Bill Mantlo writing and plotting it, and tentatively Butch Guice is going to draw it. It's going to be a four part mini-series. There isn't much I know about it. I know it takes place in the Microverse. I'm not very familiar with the **Micronauts**, I know **X-Men** better. I stay on Earth. A Jack of Hearts mini-series is even more

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in the planning stages. Bill Mantlo will be writing that. We're not sure who the artist is going to be. The **Superboxers** graphic novel is an idea that Ron Wilson created. Basically that's about boxers in the future. It takes place in a futuristic society where the corporate world is kind of running the entire world. They take care of the people who work for them and everything like that. Boxing is kind of a relief provided by the corporate executive types for their serf-like masses to enjoy. The basic premise of this graphic novel is, in addition to this corporate structure, there's an underground world, people who don't belong to the corporate world. They have their own boxers, their own heroes. It's basically about one particular boxer who eventually meets up with the corporate world champion. Ron Wilson has created this entire world of futuristic boxing designs of the gloves and the equipment and the training facilities and all that.

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Right now John Byrne will be writing it for us and tentatively Armando Gil might be inking it.

CF: It sounds like sort of a cross between "Rollerball" and the "Rocky" pictures.

Budiansky: I'm sure there are elements of both, I've seen both movies and Im certain there are elements of both in it. The thing about the Rocky in particular, I mean, that idea's been done a few hundred times before Rocky came along. It's just another version of the kid from the street fighting his way to the top. I think that Ron has hit on something. Boxing right now is a very popular subject to do and I think he's come up with a good premise for it. Right now we're just working out the plot. The basic elements of the plot are there. We just have to work it more with Byrne. The next project I have down here is the Hercules mini-series which is a follow-up of the first Hercules mini-series which Bob Layton will again be pencilling, inking, and writing. Other than it being a four part mini-series which should be on the stands late this

year, I really don't know much else about what he has mind for that. If it's as good as the first one, it should be okay -- it should be very good. Tentatively we're going to do a Black Panther mini-series in which Denys Cowan will be working on the art. That's also in the planning stages right now. We're planning a four part Beast and Dazzler mini-series. That will have Don Perlin on the art and Ann Nocenti doing the scripting. Right now we're working out the plot. There's going to be a Hulk graphic novel which Jim Shooter is supposed to be writing and Bret Blevins and Vince Colleta are slated for the art chores on. Again, this is in the planning stage. The Thor graphic novel -- that's in the same boat as the Hulk graphic novel. That will have Jim Shooter and Bill Sienkiewicz doing the artwork.

CF: What can you tell us about that?

Budiansky: Nothing. There's a back cover to it. It's a beautiful back cover. Unfortunately we don't think that we can sell it on that alone, but it's a beautiful painting by Bill Sienkiewicz of the Thunder God's helmet. I think his hammer's in it too. It's very nice. I don't know how many will sell based on that alone, but it's a beautiful back cover. This should come out fairly soon. We're doing a reprint of the Kree Skrull war that appeared in the **Avengers** issues 93-97. We'll be starting out, probably with a seven page synopsis of some of the events that lead into issue 93 and then we will be re-printing it into two sixty-four page books. It will be Baxter paper, Baxter text format, wrap around covers -- similar to the Warlock and the Dr. Strange.

CF: What format will the seven page synopsis be in?

Budiansky: We're having Alan Zelenetz do a recap, probably mostly in captions, no people speaking, and we're still not certain how the art is going to be handled, whether we're going to be reprinting the art that applies to the recap from those issues, or whether we'll have somebody new take on the art. Right now we're still trying to figure out who is going to be doing the cover etc.

I can't tell you anymore than that right now. Another re-print series which we're planning on doing is Moon Knight. These ar the Moon Knights that appeared in the **Hulk** magazine and the one issue of **Marvel Preview** in which he had his own issue. We'll be reprinting that in three 48 page books. The Moon Knight story that we will be re-printing from the **Marvel Preview** issue will be printed in color for the first time which is the way it was originally intended to be. Again, Bill Sienkiewicz will probably be doing the covers for those. He'll be doing a painting. The most immediate project that we're working on, which should see print sometime in mid-April, is an adaptation of a full-length animation movie called "Rock and Rule." This is a movie that is being produced by Nelvana Limited. They're also working on the X-Men movie that you might be aware of. The basic plot of this concerns a futuristic superscience-sorcery society. It's about this aging, decrepit, degenerate, rock and roll, legendary star. His name is Mok. Mok wants to go out with a big bang for his final concert. Through computer sorcery he's figured out a way to summon a demon from another dimension to appear on stage in the middle of the concert. It beats Pete Townsend breaking his guitar over a drum-set and it beats Ozzie Osborne eating chickens or whatever. What he has to do is he has to find this one voice who can sing the proper melody which will summon the demon and that's the basic plot. He has to find this person and she

turns out to be the singer in a small town, struggling, rock and roll band. She's sort of the hero of the story. There's a musical sound track done by Debbie Harry, Cheap Trick, Iggy Pop, Lou Reed, Earth Wind and Fire, and fantastic animation effects which should be even more fantastic on a movie screen. I've only seen it on a video cassette. We expect that to be out in April. We're doing it in a unusual format. It will be in a Marvel Super Special Magazine format. The movie studios themselves will be suppiying the artwork. In other words, they'll be taking it from the negatives of the movie and fitting it to a page lay-out and we'll be scripting it down here. So you'll actually be seeing scenes from the movie and not the interpretation of our artists of what the movie is.

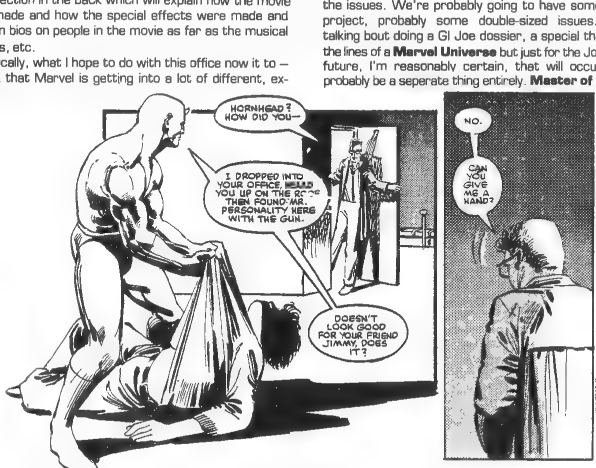
CF: What Larry Hama is having done on the adaptation of Fire and Ice...hes having an inker enhance the work.

Budiansky: We haven't seen the artwork yet, but that's a possibility. We haven't seen what it will look like when they send it to us. He's a bit more ahead on his project then I am on mine; he's been working on it longer. When they start sending down the artwork for us to see, then I guess we'll be able to make that kind of decision. Right now we have Dave Kraft set to do the article section in the back which will explain how the movie was made and how the special effects were made and certain bios on people in the movie as far as the musical credits, etc.

Basically, what I hope to do with this office now it to – I think that Marvel is getting into a lot of different, exciting new formats, mini-series, graphic novels, and I would like to be known as the editor who provides all these special projects for the readers. That's my basic interest in what I'm doing now, to get involved in as many new ideas, get away from the standard monthly comic book style format and get into as many new areas as possible and explore and experiment with all sorts of new things. These projects tend to attract some of the more creative and talented people around and it's really exciting to work with these people. That's the sort of thing I hope your readers will be seeing from this office.

O'NEIL

O'Neil: Daredevil is going to go along much as it has been. The big event coming up is issue 200 which will be a big double-sized issue and will feature the return of one of Daredevil's deadliest, rottenest enemies. It will be the climax of a continuity which will begin in issue 196 which is what we're working on now. There's lots of stuff happening with **GI Joe**. There's TV commercials for five of the issues. We're probably going to have some special project, probably some double-sized issues. We're talking bout doing a GI Joe dossier, a special thing along the lines of a **Marvel Universe** but just for the Joes. In the future, I'm reasonably certain, that will occur. It will probably be a seperate thing entirely. **Master of Kung Fu**


HORNHEAD? HOW DID YOU—
I DROPPED INTO YOUR OFFICE, HELD YOU UP ON THE ROOF, THEN FOUND MR. PERSONALITY HERE WITH THE GUN.
DOESN'T LOOK GOOD FOR YOUR FRIEND JIMMY, DOES IT?
NO.
CAN YOU GIVE ME A HAND?
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is, unfortunately, dying in three issues. I think it's going out gloriously. I think it's better than it's been for a long time. In the final issue we're going to wrap up all of the loose threads. It's doing to be a double-sized issue. Everything you want to know about Shang Chi should get answered. Moon Knight has a terrific new artist, Kevin Nowlan. We're going to be doing a lot of back-up and a lot of feature stuff. The nice thing about editing that book is that it's not as rigid as most comic books. We have a great deal more flexibility. We've been making pretty good use of it for a year. We're going to continue to. The book is a bi-monthly but that should give us time to get all the bugs out. We will be doing two or three more stories and then a whole bunch of surprises which I'm not at liberty to talk about. We're going to keep experimenting. That's the book we've experimented with the most. The covers for example – one does not have Moon Knight on it. That's fairly radical for comic books. We've done things like reduce the size of the logo if we get a better picture that way. We follow fewer rules for Moon Knight than there are for almost any commercial comic book. We will continue to take advantage of that and I hope to take more advantage of it.

We're working long distance with Kevin who's in Kansas. We're in the process of figuring out how long it takes to get things done and how long things have to be in transit and so on. We'll get it all figured out pretty soon. On **Powerman/Iron Fist**, we have a new writer, a relatively new writer, Kurt Busiek, and we will have a new penciller – I can't say who. It will be one of two people. I guess the book is moving more toward the basics: Powerman and Iron Fist, the relationship between the two vastly different heroes, and the gritty feeling that the best people have gotten into it. We're talking about costume changes and we're letting the readers decide. We'll probably go with the majority opinion. Around here it's kind of half and half. Half the people say there ought to be costume changes and half the people say leave well enough alone. I'm just going to let them all make up my mind for me. We'll publish **Bizarre Adventures** three times this year. The issue we're working on now is called Strange Pets or Weird Pets or something of that sort, featuring one terrific story by Steve Perry and Rich Veitch, a story by Paul Smith and Steve Grant which I expect will be very good, and an Al Milgrom story in the vein that Milgrom has established. He's sort of doing his slightly fantasised autobiography and reactions to New York city in installments in **Bizarre Adventures**. Grey Morrow's got a piece and, of course, there will always be Bucky Bizarre.

CF: When the feature first appeared there was a column that described the origin of each feature, but you never mentioned the origin of Bucky Bizarre.

O'Neil: When I inherited the magazine it didn't have any identity at all. It was a series of one-shots rather than a magazine that featured different stories. I tried to give it an identity. The first thing was to establish a format which I did with the help of Nora Maclin. The second was to put some continuing thing in there since we did not have a format. We were going to be science-fiction one month and fantasy the next month and super-heroes the month after that. It couldn't be a character who was tied to any one of those genres. So I made up Bucky Bizarre as a character that we could fit into any genre

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and what we had in mind is that he would satirize the contents of the rest of the issue. Then Larry Hama designed the visuals for it and I called on my old friend Steve Skeates who has one of the most bizarre senses of humor of anyone I know to do the scripting and at Larry's suggestion we got Steve Smallwood to actually do the art. I think they're very amusing little pieces. I make fun of it but I'm really rather proud of it. Then we're going to do a "Revenge" issue sometime over the summer and probably another "Christmas" issue. This one

seems to have been very successful. It's too early to tell, but the preliminary indications are that a lot of people responded to a magazine that had a skeleton wearing a Santa suit on the cover. I got more satisfaction out of editing that than I have gotten out of editing anything in a long time. So I would say it's very probably that we'll do another "Hate the Holidays" issue. I thing we'llget some Jewish holidays in next time. I did realize that we were bing kind of exclusionary this last time and we shouldn't have done that. That magazine is put together when I have an idea or somebody has an idea for a theme and we accumulate enough material or enough promises of material to fill up an issue. It's scheduled for three, but it's very loose. We don't really know. I can guarantee the three issues, and it's possible that there might be a fourth. Our last project is **Alpha Flight**, John Byrne's Alpha Flight, which I guess everybody knows is a spin-off of the X-Men. It's a Canadian super-hero group. We have two issues in the drawer. It's pure John Byrne. He pencils, inks, and writes it. It's very much in the spirit of the Kirby/Ditko approach to super heroes and particularly super hero groups. There's a lot of human interest. He works very hard at making super-heroes real people. I think John Byrne is a consumate visual story-teller. I wrote a script over his artwork several months ago and it was a delight to do. All that's going to be there. The break-down is that the first issue will be double-sized -- who's the Alpha Flight and what are they going to do? -- subsequent issues will have an 18 page story and then a five page back-up delineating the origin of each of the Alpha Flight characters (At least those characters whose origins are not incorporated into the main story.) We have the first five issues figured out. After that, we don't know. I will talk with John some time in the next week and get it all hashed out. Other possible projects are an Elektra mini-series. That is entirely dependant on Frank Miller's availability. I wouldn't consider doing it with anyone else. The Krull movie adaptation will be out by mid-

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summer. I think the movie is scheduled to open on August sixth. We'll probably be out about a week before that. That's everything I know about right now.

I like to work on a number of different things. I don't like to be typecast or stuck in a rut. I'm already working on at least three fairly radically different kinds of things. That's just as an editor; that's not counting what I do as a writer. What I have as a writer is one major movie adaptation coming up, "Fire and Ice," two bery different kinds of super-heroes. I don't know if I'll be writing Daredevil forever, but I'll be doing it for the next three or four issues and it's very different from Iron Man, very different. So that satisfies my need for variety. That seems to be the direction the whole company is moving in. I think that's terrific.

JONES

CF: What is coming up from the X-Men?

Jones: We have some really sad things happen to Storm – terrible things happen to Storm. Interesting things happen to Charlie, some of them good, some of them bad.

CF: Can you give us any details at all?

Jones: Nope. We don't want to spoil it for anyone.

HMMPH! IF THIS MAD HAPPENED DURING MY TEST, THE CAKE WOULDA EXPLODED WHEN I TOUCHED IT!
MAYBE YOU JUST DON'T LIKE RIGHT, JUNIOR!
HERE, JEAN-- ALLOW ME TO CUT YOU A PIECE OF CAKE-- IN MY OWN WAY!
WHY, THANK YOU, CYCLOPS! BUT THAT'S A BIT LIKE USING AN ELEPHANT GUN TO KILL A MOUSE FLY!
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There's a wedding scheduled for #173 providing nobody gets killed along the way. Scott has met the woman of his dreams. There's a big 20th anniversary issue.

CF: What happens in that?

Jones: Can't tell.

CF: What can you tell.

Jones: We have an annual coming up with Mike Golden.

CF: Will there be any changes is the staff of the book?

Jones: No. We've left the staff on the book just like it is. It's absolutely perfect.

CF: Tell me about the New Mutants.

Jones: Chris, why don't **you** tell about the Mutants.

Claremont: Issue four is a change of pace issue called "Who's Scaring Stevie" which is kind of suspenseful and exciting and a definite change of page from the usual super-hero mayhem. Five and Six involve the New Mutants with the Viper and the Silver Samurai in a story which will lead into the X-Men. Seven and eight and possibly nine in-

volve the New Mutants going to the Amazon where they encounter a group of ex-patriot Romans. After that we've got Charlie's kid sitting in a holding tank in Scotland; we've got possibly the Hell-fire club; we've got mysteries involving Xian.

CF: What can you say about Charlie's kid?

Claremont: He's in his late teens. I would assume his power is psychic. At the moment he's autistic. He may or may not join the team; he may or may not be a good guy; he may or may not be bald. There are all sorts of options at this point. That's the advantage of a holding tank. We can leave him there until we figure out something decent. There's no New Mutants annual for this year.

CF: What's going on with Ka-Zar?

Jones: Let Danny Fingeroth tell you about Ka-Zar since he's editing it.

Fingeroth: Armando Gil is pencilling and inking; issue 26 has the wrap aroung photo cover; in issue 27 there's a full length two page Ka-Zar story. In issue 27 they're going back to rescue Shanna from herself. Shanna is mad. Ka-Zar may die during this project as my Buth and Dkark. Ka-Zar and Shanna may or may not be getting married.

HMM... SEE BEING PART OF A FOOD CHAIN ISN'T ALL IT'M CRACKED UP TO BE!
LATER
I MUST BE LOSING MY TOUCH. YOU'VE STILL GOT THE LONG FACE
HE... COME BACK HAH HOLD YOU ARMS CLOSE DOWN SIDE
ZABU? IT'S A LONG STORY C'MON, LET'S GET SOME THING TO EAT, I'M STARVED
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Issue 29 will be double-sized and will be on sale both newstand and direct. It will resolve just about everything and probably untangle new threads that will hopefully keep you coming back for more. Beyond issue 29 I don't know. I'm toying with the idea of bringing back the Plunderer although if we did we would revamp him much the same way we revamped Ka-Zar. I don't think anyone really cares what happens to the ole Plunderer. It would be real good soap opera and hopefully real good adventure too. That's where Ka-Zar is headed now. And it's bi-monthly now so we have lots of time to worry about these fine points.

Jones: Indiana Jones – David Micheline is writing it from now on and Howard Chaykin is pencilling issue six. Terry Austin inked it. It's beautiful stuff. With issue number seven Kerry Gammill takes over. Indiana finds a map that implies that Atlantis does still exist and heads there with Marion. We hope that Kerry Gammill will be doing all the issues in the future. We'll see. We expect it to be a whole new direction for the book. The penciled pages that we have are gorgeous.

CF: How about **Star Wars**?

Jones: Star Wars – We've got some real fun enjoyable stories, in 71 and 72, a two parter by Mary Jo Duffy and Ron Frenz. It features a race of creatures known as the Stenaxes, which are winged aliens with big teeth. None of them speak. Luke and Landeau go to Stenos because they think they're going to find Han Solo there. In 73 our heroes have picked up a nymphomaniac alien girl who loves Luke a lot and head off to get some tapes that the Rebellion wants – the Imperials also want the tapes and it's a big chase to see who gets the tapes first. 74 Continues the saga on **Waterworld**! After that Artoo goes undercover and meets Darth Vader and Leia becomes a cosmic chanteuse. As for The Return of the Jedi, Archie Goodwin's the only one who knows at this point and he ain't telling.

We have a number of mini-series that we're working on. One of them is Storm and Illyana. In **X-Men #180** Illyana lost seven years of her life. She was six when she entered an interdimensional portal and when she came out – two minutes later our time – she was 13 years old. This tells us what happened to her, what powers she had – because she does have powers – how she aquired them, who her teachers were...She is a mutant but she's a mutant who has been manipulated by Belasco's sorcery. In Illyana's mini-series we learn more of her powers as we go along, so, people who are Illyana fans can watch and see her develop. John Buscema and Tom Palmer are the artists scheduled. Claremont will write it.

CF: Whose side is she on?

Jones: Good question. Considering her training it could go either way.

The Nightcrawler mini-series will be written by Chris. Nightcrawler is a huge swash-buckling epic. Dave Cockrum is going to draw it – maybe he'll ink it too, we don't know yet. Dave will have to finish his graphic novel, **The Futurians**, before he could even begin it. We also have planned a Kitty mini-series. Al Milgrom is scheduled

to draw that one. **Star Wars Annual** is Klaus Janson and Jo Duffy. It's a really sad and tragic story. It's really going to be good.

CF: Do you have any new projects planned?

Jones: Actually I have something kicking around in the back of my head. I don't want to say anything about it for fear that somebody will do it first. So yes, there is a new project that I want to do and I've talked to Jim about it already.

CF: And Jim was interested?

Jones: Yes – well at least he's interested in hearing more.

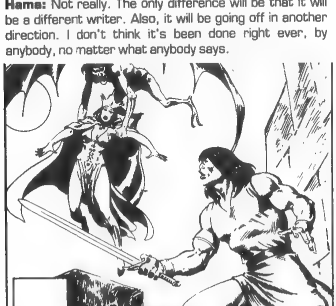
HAMA

Hama: The black-and-white **Savage Sword** will be written by Michael Fleisher and drawn by Buscema.

We'd like to stick with inkers that we've been able to get a hold of: Nestor Redondo comes to mind. Guys like Nestor and Ricardo Villamonte. We have Ernie Chan on the chores of the color book with Buscema pencilling. Issue #149 will be Bruce Jones' last issue as a writer on Conan and then Fleisher will be taking over.

CF: Are there any special plans for 150? Is it going to be a special issue?

Hama: Not really. The only difference will be that it will be a different writer. Also, it will be going off in another direction. I don't think it's been done right ever, by anybody, no matter what anybody says.



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CF: What aspects do you plan to change?

Hama: Well, like Howard.

CF: What aspects of Howard do you plan to delve into?

Hama: The whole aspect of Conan being a barbarian and being a warrior. The whole aspect of the mythic horror that's even older than mankind. The air of sorcery that's real strong in the Howard stories.

CF: The atmosphere of the material.

Hama: Right. It's missing. Certain facets of it are missing from the Thomas and Smith stuff because of the limits of what they were doing. The character of Conan seemed a lot milder back then. It's probably because that's what they could get away with at the time. It's not so much what you show – it's the character's attitude. I'm going to encourage the writers and artists to do a more gutsy Conan, delving more into the psychological aspects of the fear behind the power, rather than a monster. Motivation is more scarey – like a sorcerer that sold his soul for some unspeakable reason rather than a guy who just shows up and casts spells.

CF: What direction do you plan to take Red Sonja?

Hama: I always felt she worked best as a foil for Conan. It's sort of like Laurel without Hardy. Her whole reason for existance was to counter-play aspects of Conan's personality. So you have this situation here where you try to put her on her own – it's sort of like one of these spin-offs from TV shows. She's a good supporting character, but it's hard to make a lead character out of somebody like that. It's a matter of finding a foil for her so that the interplay can continue.

Hama: In other words, give her a side-kick.

Hama: Not necessarily. A side-kick is permanent. But we need to be able to have that sort of element present. We also need to establish where she's coming from, who she is, and make her stand up -- rather than make her just this girl with a sword. If she has a reason for being what she is and that's real strong and fortified, we have a better chance with the character.

CF: Tell me about Machine Man.

Hama: Well, Tom DeFalco's writing it. Trimpe will be doing pencils and inks on Machine Man. We have high hopes for that. Because of the nature of the character, I think Trimpe is really well suited for it. We should get some exciting visuals out of it. I think Tom DeFalco's got a real handle on a different type of direction to go with the character. I think it will work out.

CF: What is this new direction?

Hama: Well, we're at that stage where it's nebulous. Partially just a lot of changes that we can make in stuff just by changing personell. That changes the complete outlook on it.

CF: What do you plan to do with the book?

Hama: We plan to make it better. The thing is, Machine Man didn't have that much of a run to begin with, and by the time the run was over, it was still sort of nebulous. So there's a lot of direction to go in. I think it's a character with a lot of potential. I don't think you should rule out a character because nothing has been done with it up until that point. I think there really is no such thing as a "bad character." There's bad handling of a character where nobody cares. Two very strong cases in point are

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Daredevil and the Green Arrow. Those were characters that just lay there for a time and then two very talented people came along and switched them around. It can be done. I think if we really get into the whole thing about all these prosthetics and get into the technology of it [Machine Man] and the fact that technology has caught up with the character...Now everyone is really conscious of micro-technology and chip technology and what can be accomplished with this stuff. We can explain a lot of this stuff. You can have stuff happen, for example, where he loses control or the guy who's building this stuff doesn't let on what it can do so he can be surprised. To inject an element of incertainty into the feature. Otherwise the stuff becomes too pat. Also, to get more complexity into the characterizations. Again, it's motivation and characterization rather than events. It seems that's the Marvel direction anyway, as opposed to the honorable opposition.

CF: What's the name of the new series you're working on?

Hama: There's two of them: Mantis and Fire and Ice.

CF: Tell me about Fire and Ice.

Hama: Fire and Ice is a Ralph Bakshi animated feature designed by Frank Frazetta. In fact, Frank Frazetta directed much of the live action footage that they shot [for rotoscope purposes]. The character poses are extremely Frazetta. He designed the characters so it has a very different look that previous Bakshi in that aspect. It's a very startling film. I don't know how they're going to react to it when they see it.

CF: When it is due to release?

Hama: We don't know.

CF: Is this an adaptation or...

Hama: What we are doing is that Denny O'Neil and I went to Los Angeles and spent the better part of a week in Bakshi's studio sitting with one of the editors a won-

derful person -- named John Williams, who ran the decks for us. We looked at the film frame by frame, literally, and chose in excess of 650 frames to blow-up. We're going to use actual frames from the film. Each frame will be blown-up to an 8 x 10 color glossy. The characters, the figures, will be enhanced by a Marvel inker at the suggestion of Bakshi himself. So we will boost the inking and drop shadows and stuff on the characters to make them look like a comic book inking job. We will shoot the thing in four-color process which means that we will get a continuous tone and the washed backgrounds and the coloring on the figures will come through. We'll have the strong comic book figures. It will be frames from the films, but enhanced. There will be two different versions of it. We'll publish it as two regular comic books in two parts and as a compilation, some sort of super special, posibly on special paper like Baxter stock.

CF: Who's being credited with pencilling?

Hama: We can't really credit a penciller. We're using the actual frames from the film.

CF: You should write "Frank Frazetta, penciller" and watch the sales go through the roof.

Hama: Well, he's not really the penciller. There are Frazetta pencil drawings on the intro sequence before the title which are pretty stunning.

CF: And you're going to be running that?

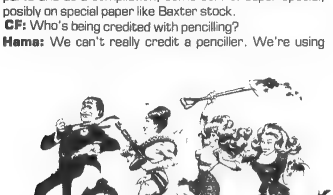
Hama: We really have to because a lot of the story information is conveyed there. It's a big part of the plot.

CF: In other words, they give a lot of the background?

Hama: Right.

CF: And the other mini-series, Mantis...

THE SECRET OF MY SUCCESS
OR:
HOW THREE BEAUTIFUL GIRLS LOVE FOR FUN AND MURDER FOR PROFIT
Shirley Jones · Stella Stevens · Honor Blackman
James Booth · Lionel Jeffries



Hama: That's pretty much up in the air. We have very little information on that except Denny O'Neil is going to write it.

CF: What's it going to be about?

Hama: It's a martial arts schtick that I think was originally conceived as a vehicle for Jackie Chan. It's probably going to grow out of that.

CF: What would you like to see it become?

Hama: I'd like to see a martial arts book done right for once. I don't think it has.

CF: What do you mean?

Some examples of Frazetta's work for motion pictures.

Hama: How can I qualify that? It hasn't been done right.
CF: What do you feel has been wrong?
Hama: I think a lot of it is attitude of the characters, the depiction of the action. There are techniques of doing it that haven't even been explored. It's hard to be specific on that. I think they've just missed the boat on it completely. The actual failure of most of the martial arts books was the fact that the people who were involved in them looked at the surface of them and that's all they saw, but that's not what made martial arts films popular to begin with. It's kind of like all the people that looked at Star Wars and said, "Oh, space ships and robots," and sank millions of dollars into movies about space ships and robots. That's all they saw. It's the same thing with martial arts. All they saw was flying fists and people getting kicked in the face. Then they said, "Okay, that's what it's about. We can do that here." In fact we had some very good American directors try to cash in on that theme and make failures out of it. Even a guy I really admire, Sam Peckinpah, fell flat on his face with that movie "The Killer Elite." He forgot what it was all about.
CF: What would you like to see happen for your titles and projects?
Hama: I'm pretty much up to my ears with the stuff I have right now. The projects I'd like to take on are slightly secret at this point. I've got a problem going to get everything caught up, so as soon as I'm on schedule we can worry about fixing things up. Once we're on schedule and once we've used up all the stuff that was requisitioned by previous people on all the books – it will be about six months before the stuff that I comissioned and really worked on starts hitting the racks. I've already started working with the writers about what I feel the direction of these characters are – expecially on the Howard books.
CF: What do you think about new people just getting into the business?
Hama: I think it's much easier to get into the business now because they're more open to looking at stuff. The way it used to be you couldn't even get you stuff shown to anybody. Secretaries, who know nothing about art, would look at some guy's portfolio and say, "This guy can't draw like Jack Kirby so he can't be any good." Something like that happened to a guy named Ed Davis who was one of the most brilliant draftsmen to come down the pike in a long time. He showed up at the Continuity Studio and knocked everybody's eyes out, including Neal's. The guy could draw like an angel. He showed his stuff at Marvel and he was told to go away. His stuff didn't look like comics.
CF: How long ago was this?
Hama: Oh, this was a while ago – '74 or something like that. You hear stories like that happening. These guys with incredible talent that showed up and nobody that knew anything ever looked at their stuff. Their stuff was looked at by an intern or something and kind of rejected out of hand. That stuff doesn't happen or shouldn't happen anymore. My contention is that if somebody wants to show me their stuff, I'll look at it, but I'll tell them if it's bad. When I was editing **Crazy**, my policy was that if somebody wanted to make an appointment and come in and see me, I'd see them. I just didn't want to look at stuff that people sent in because anyone can stick a stamp on something.

GRUENWALD

Gruenwald: I'm in charge of the four Avengers titles: **Avengers**, **Team America**, **Iron Man**, and **Thor**, plus **Marvel Universe**, the ever continuing reference guide for all human beings who are interested in any Marvel characters.

Starting with the **Avengers**, the creative team will be Roger Stern, Al Milgrom and Joe Sinnott. For my money, Roger Stern is the best Marvel Universe writer alive today. Not only is he a vast store-house of knowledge of the past but he really thinks about the characters that he's doing and there's not a single Marvel Universe character that he can't write right on the mark. The **Avengers** book has always been the focal point of the Marvel Universe. It was Marvel's first book featuring a crossover of characters. Everyone walks into the book at some point. So Roger is going to continue with all the great things of the past and I really think the book is going to rival in appearance and readability the best that's ever been done. One of the things that's always been interesting about the Avengers is that membership never stays the same for very long. We still have a continuing core group: Thor, Iron Man and Cap. The Avengers book is going to reflect more of what's going on the their regular books. If Iron Man is having problems in his regular book, then he won't show up in Avengers for a while. One of the things I'm really pleased with that just came out involves a phone call the new **Iron Man** makes to Avengers Mansion. You hear Iron Man's side of the phone call in the **Iron Man** book and you hear the rest of the conversation at the Avengers meeting in the **Avengers** book on sale the same month. Now, those things aren't spectacular; they're just minor little things that Marvel used to do very well and very often. We're going to have a lot more things like that. The character of new Captain Marvel is going to be explored. There are a number of heroes, other than Thor, Iron Man and Cap that are going to be in on a regular basis because they appear no where else and they're real fun to work with. She-Hulk, for example. I was not the greatest fan of the She-Hulk, but I love her in the **Avengers**. She really adds something different to the group. Joe Sinnott inks such a beautiful She-Hulk that I'm in love with the character. The Wasp will continue to display a greater maturity of character now that her divorce from Yellowjacket is final. There's also a new Avenger, Eros of Titan, who takes the name Starfox. He's a character along the line of a Hawkeye or a Beast, but he's more of a ladies' man than the Beast, and he's more of a fun-loving, easy going guy than Hawkeye. There's nobody quite like him. He's got the basic powers of super-normal strength and flight, but he's got one power which has not been revealed to date because we haven't seen that much of him. You've never seen a power like it.

There is going to be a cross-over in **Fantastic Four** involving Annihilus. The Wizard, formerly of the Frightful Four, is going to regain some of his stature as a powerful villain.

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The **Iron Man** book is going to continue to chronicle the downfall and eventual up-rise of Tony Stark. There has been some criticism of the return of the alcoholism subplot. In fact, when Denny O'Neil brought the idea to me, I said, "Not again!" But Denny convinced me that it's the kind of problem that shouldn't be licked in one page as it was before. It's a very real problem for a human being or fictional character to have...a problem that recurs. Even if a human being can lick it once, that doesn't mean it stays licked. So we just wanted to delve into it at greater length and really explore the ramifications of it. I think it's very interesting that Marvel characters have weaknesses that stem from character flaws, not flaws in their powers.

In the past, there have been threats to takeover Stark International. It's going to be more than a threat this time. What Stark does when he realizes the company that he inherited from his father is being taken away from him leads to very interesting adventures. You won't be able to guess what the eventual outcome will be.

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In **Captain America** we have continuing subplots in which we prove that just because a girlfriend learns the identity of a super hero doesn't mean she's going to die in eight issues. We're also continuing to develop some of his other friends and supporting characters. We do an interesting three-part story with the Viper, who I always though was one of the few great Marvel female villains, as well as one of the few Stan Lee female villains that remained a villain. After that we're going to bring back

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Porcupine and make people like him. I offered J.M. DeMatteis a challenge to make the Scarecrow a formidable foe and in **CAP #280** he has admirably succeeded and it's my favorite Cap story that he's ever written. So I said, "Okay, you may have been able to do it with the Scarecrow, but he had a neat name. If you can do it with the Porcupine then you know you're a real writer." So he's rising to the challenge. During the summer months we're going to have a really strange crossover with Deathlok – yes, you thought you saw the last of him, but we had you fooled. Part of that will take place in Deathlok's own time. Captain America is the greatest super soldier of the '40s and Deathlok is the greatest super soldier of the '90s. So put them together and see what you've got.

We also have some really interesting things planned for Thor. We're going to finally solve the Sif/Jane Foster dilemma. One hundred issues ago, Sif merged her life essence with the dying Jane Foster who came out of nowhere just to get sick and need her life saved. Then Jane Foster went up to Asgard, turned into Sif, and hasn't been seen except for one strange cameo appearance. So we're going to solve the mystery of what ever happened to Jane Foster. The ending will surprise people. It will not be what they expect. Along the way we will learn a secret of Don Blake that we've never learned before – one that no one's really thought about before.

This next year is going to be a big year for Thor. Walt Simonson will be taking over the creative chores and he has fantastic things in store for the old God of Thunder. There's also a terrific Thor graphic novel to be done by Bill Sienkiewicz and Jim Shooter. It's real gutsy, as much a Blake story as Thor.

GOODWIN

Goodwin: In 1983, **Epic** will be featuring two long-running serials. One of them will be Generation Zero, which is a post-holocaust, science-fiction background adventure. The art and plot are by Pepe Moreno who has done a number of short stories for the magazine. It will be scripted by me. That will start in **Epic 17** and it will run through most of 1983. After our Last of the Dragon serial, which is being done by Carl Potts, Denny O'Neil, Terry Austin and Marie Severin, we'll be starting a new serial called The Sacred and the Profane, which is by Ken Steacy and Dean Motter. Ken did the artwork and Dean scripted it. This is a completely revamped and revised version of the serial that only appeared in **Star Reach**. That was done in black-and-white. Ken has redone it totally in color with entirely new layouts and new drawings. Dean has gone back and rewritten and added stuff to it. This one I'm particularly excited about because I think it's a really novelistic approach to graphics material. While there is adventure and action in it, there are also philisophical viewpoints and a lot more novelistic approach to the whole thing. So that one I'm very excited about. Barry Windsor-Smith is working on two jobs for us. Hopefully at least one of those will be completed during 1983. When we consider Barry's last job for us, an eight pager that he worked on for about a year, I'm not making any guarantees. A fifteen page job called Devil's Advocate will probably appear sometime in 1983 done by Barry. We've got Mike Kaluta working on a black-and-white story for us. He's doing one in **Epic #17** and probably two or three issues down the line after that

I -- AM --
-- SYLVESTER SANTANGELO! -- SLY!
I'M FARM -- I MEAN, FROM L.A. --!
HA HA HA! THEY THINK TO STEAL MY MIND -- MINE, COYOTE'S!
IF ONLY THEY KNEW WHO IT IS THEY ATTACK! IF ONLY THEY KNEW HOW GREAT MY MIND IS!

he'll be doing another piece for us. Late in 1983, probably the next serial after Generation Zero, will be a piece called Six From Sirius, which is by Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy. That's more toward the end of 1983. Moving away from **Epic Illustrated**, we've got the Dreadstar Epic Comic coming out. Toward the end of February will be the first issue of the **Coyote** Epic Comic which is by Steve Englehart and Steve Leiloha. Probably toward the middle of the year or next Fall we'll be adding one or two more, which the contracts aren't signed on so I can't really talk about yet. Right now, Epic Comics consists of **Dreadstar** and **Coyote**.

CF: Can you tell me anything more about **Dreadstar** and **Coyote**?

Goodwin: A lot of this stuff is creator directed material. They have an idea of where they're going with it but a lot of it isn't set up issue by issue. There's not a lot to hype in terms of that.

CF: How about the graphic novels?

Goodwin: I'm not doing all the graphic novels. Jo Duffy and I are handling **Star Slammers** by Walt Simonson which may well be the best graphic novel Marvel has done to date. They're characters Walt's been carrying around with him and kind of worked on from time to time ever since he started getting interested in comics. After having this stuff cooking around for a long time it's all gelled very well. After experimenting and trying his

hend at writing on different pieces, I think the script and art have really come together perfectly. Another exciting thing that we'll be working on is the Berni Wrightson **Frankenstein**. This isn't a graphic novel. It will be the Mary Shelley novel illustrated by Berni. He's done roughly 48 drawings for it – that's including the covers and end papers, things like that. It breaks down into about two full-page illustrations per chapter. It's really a profusely illustrated book, just overwhelmingly beautiful black-and-white illustrations, some of the best stuff he's ever done. He's worked on this for years and around this Spring we'll be publishing it. The book will have an introduction by Stephen King and then the complete Mary Shelley text and Berni's illustrations. This will be Marvel's first venture into actual book publishing. It will be that trade paperback size. I'm excited about this because,

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since it's illustrated by Berni Wrightson, it will be a very nice item for direct sales. But I'm also looking forward to this making a pretty big splash in the regular marketplace. I think people are really going to be dazzled by what Berni has done in the way of illustrating this.

CF: Several years ago, Marvel published some prose novels. One of them involving Spiderman, another involving Captain America...

Goodwin: Those were licensed by Marvel. I forget which paperback company was doing them. This is Marvel publishing its own book so it's in a totally different league. As far as I know we haven't done any other novels on our own. Our own paperback publishing has always been reprinted comic book material.

CF: Will Marvel be soliciting original manuscripts in the future?

Goodwin: No, I think this is a special one-time case. I'm sure if special circumstances came up we'd consider it again, but this doesn't mean Marvel's going into fiction or non-fiction book publishing.

CF: What other projects do you see coming up?

Goodwin: As we go along we'll be adding more and more Epic Comics. I think that's one of the most exciting areas opening up right now – this idea of creator owned, regularly published comics titles. It's obviously going to be one of the waves of the future. It's like an additional arm shooting off the main body of comics. Certainly with Epic Comics, the number of titles will increase more and more. Hopefully, as the titles increase, we will be able to diversify a little more away from what you see in main stream comics and do exciting and somewhat experimental stuff.

CF: Are you only looking for established comic book writers?

Goodwin: Not specifically. I think anyone good with what we consider to be an interesting and viable idea to turn into an ongoing series. The whole idea with Epic Comics is

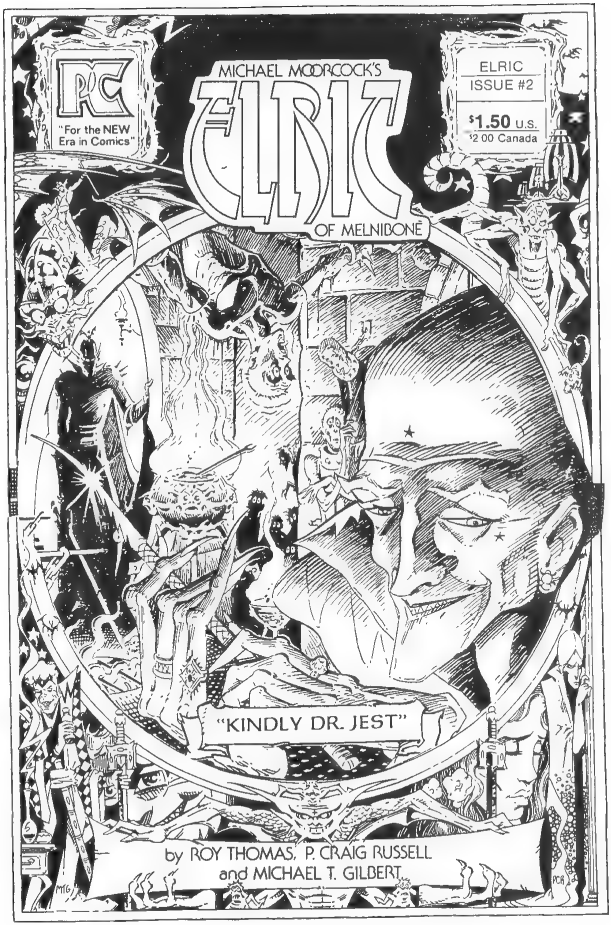
that they're not mini-series and they're not like a serial we'd fun for a while in **Epic Illustrated**, they're ongoing characters that you could publish for years and years as long as they're well received.

CF: What changes would you like to see in your titles or in the company in general?

Goodwin: Eventually I'd like to see **Epic Illustrated** go monthly. I think eventually that will happen. It almost happened this year. I think if sales keep increasing as they seem to be, it inevitably will happen. Otherwise, I'd just like to see us continue doing what we're doing and doing a little more of it. I'm very happy with the way things have been going with it.

CF: Are there any other features you'd like to tell us about?

Goodwin: There is probably a lot of things for **Epics Illustrated** but without my line-up sheet, I'm lost. John Zack has two jobs coming up. In Epic 19 we'll have a 12-page Vaughn Bode strip that has never been printed anywhere else. It's material that Vaughn did pre-dating the Cheech Wizard stuff he did later on, but using what was to become the Cheech Wizard character. He did pencil strip samples for, I think, Post Hall Syndicate. They were interested in a syndicated comic strip. The strip never really came about and these pencilled strips have just sat around for years. His son Mark inked them and colored them. We'll be running that along with an article in **Epic 19**. **Epic 19** also features a continuation of a three part black-and-white job by Jay Muth who is a very fine up-coming illustrator and has worked in a very impressive pencil technique on a little three part story. That will be running in 18, 19 and 20. Rick Bryant did an interview with Syd Mead and that will probably be running in issue 18. **Jewel in the Clouds** by John Zack will be running in **Epic #20**. Ryder by John will be running in issue #21. In issue #22 we'll be beginning a black-and-white series by Tim Conrad called "Toad's Wart" which is a medieval fantasy. I think it will be very impressive. We'll have lots of short stories and hopefully a few surprises as we go along. Up and coming covers will be by Jim Steranko, John Bolton, Art Suydam, Steve Hickman and Clyde Caldwell. There are a lot of those in the works. Almost forgot...we had a project by Don McGregor and P. Craid Russell that was originally going to be used as a four-part continuing story in **Epic Illustrated**. It was **Killraven: Last Dreams Broken**. It picked up the old Marvel **War of the Worlds** series that Don and Craig did and tied up some of the loose ends from that book's cancellation. Recently a hole opened up in our Graphic Novel series and, with Jim Shooter's blessing, we decided to switch it to that format. **Killraven** will be Marvel Graphic Novel #27 and should be a real beaut!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"KINDLY DR. JEST"
by ROY THOMAS, P. CRAIG RUSSELL
and MICHAEL T. GILBERT

SHOOTER

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARVEL'S HEAD HONCHO

By Maggie Thompson and Hal Schuster

CF: How has it been to experience being the non-New York fan growing into the Captain of Industry?

Shooter: I think it's the most fantastic thing that could ever happen. I wasn't really a comics fan, not that there's anything wrong with being a comics fan. I stopped reading DC Comics when I was, maybe eight. At that time there weren't any Marvel Comics. The New Marvel Comics hadn't started to come out yet. I wasn't even aware of comics in general until I was about 12. Then I started running across Marvel Comics in barber shops and I was in the hospital for a week and I saw some comics there. The DC comics were still boring and I remembered why I didn't read them anymore. These new fangled Marvel Comics were more interesting. I might have been interested in them anyway but I had a different kind of interest at that point. My family was not well off and we needed money and I was looking for a way to earn money. I started realizing "Hey, there's a big difference between these, which I don't like, [THE DC s] and these which I do like,[the Marvels]. What is that difference? And if I could do that, couldn't I sell this.

I mean, somebody must get paid for these things. So I very pointedly sat down and figured out how do do comics. I did some comics for my own amusement to try how it worked. And then finally, in the summer when I was 13, I wrote and drew a comic book. I didn't know what a comic book script looked like so I thought you had to draw the pictures; I didn't know. No one was around to explain it to me. So I drew something that looked as close like their comic as I could possibly make it for the Legion of Super Heroes and sent it off to DC. The reason I picked DC Comics was because I knew I couldn't write as well as Stan Lee, but I figured I could do better than some of the guys who were doing the comics at DC, in particular the Legion of Super Heroes – so I picked that one. This sounds like a horrible criticism of the guys who were doing it at that time, who later I got to know sort of second hand. Occasionally I'd meet them and I started to realize that they were really excellent writers in the technical sense and that they had quite a bit going for them. It wasn't entirely their fault. I think that the reason their work was so boring was largely due to the general approach that DC was taking in those days. For whatever reasons – I thought the Legion of Super Heroes was their worst book and I tried to write a script for that. And I got a letter from the editor who asked me to write another one so I did. Then he bought them all. He bought the first one and I sent him two more and he bought those two also. Then he gave me an assignment to do, a Supergirl story. I did that and he gave me another assignment and I just worked regularly for him for the next five years.

CF: That editor was...

Shooter: Mort Weisinger. The point is that I didn't really get into it as a fan who wanted to get into the comics which I had enjoyed as a kid. I got into them with a very desperate need to earn a living. At no time during the five years that I worked for Mort Weisinger did I ever once consider that I would grow up and be a comic book person. I was going to be the scientist, doctor, lawyer, Indian chief, whatever. I was in heavy academic courses in high school. I was one of the sputnik generation of kids who was conditioned from earliest youth to believe that he would grow up to be a doctor or scientist or something. I always thought of comics as a means to an end. It wasn't 'till years later, after having

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done a bunch of other things, that I realized that I hadn't done anything I'd enjoyed as much as comic books. That was really what I liked and that was really what I seemed to do the best. I found my way back into comics. It **was** sort of a fan's dream, but I didn't even know that it was what I wanted to do until I'd been doing it for seven years. But here I am none-the-less, and I love what I'm doing and I think it's terrific. I'm happy as a clam.

CF: What is your educational background?

Shooter: Just high school. I had scholarships, but I couldn't afford to take advantage of them. The only other training I had was seat-of-my-pants training at various other jobs. I wangled my way into some advertising work and managed to work with some good people there who helped me quite a bit. My justification for being where I am is that I worked very closely with Mort Weisinger for five years and Mort, even though his approach was not something that most comics fans appreciate, really, on a technical basis, knew what he was doing. Then after I came to Marvel to work as an editor, I worked very closely with Stan for several years and discovered that Stan, on a fundamental level and on a technical level, agrees almost to the letter with everything Mort ever taught me. It's only the fact that Stan was a better writer and much more "with it." That was really the difference. The difference wasn't any magic, wasn't any actual technical part of the writing that made Stan's books better. Marvel books were better than DC comics because Mort Weisinger had me and other writers and Stan Lee had Stan. I found that working with Stan and

WELL, I'LL BE--! THEY PLUMB KNOCKED THEMSELVES OUT!
WOW!! LOOK AT THAT! FLASH CAUGHT BOTH OF THOSE GUYS!
GREAT! NOW'S FLASH GONNA HOWD YOU DO IT?
YOU KNOW WHAT? I JUST UP AND LET 'EM HAVE IT!
MEANTIME, HAVING CHANGED BACK TO HIS NORMAL IDENTITY, PETER PARKER SETS AN IDEA...
THIS IS TOO GOOD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PASS UP!
I JUST REALIZED, FLASH -- YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO WASN'T AROUND WHILE SPIDER-MAN WAS FIGHTING THE LIVING BRAIN!
AND YOU KNOCKED THESE TWO BURLY GUYS OUT AS EASY AS PIE! AND YOU'RE JUST ABOUT SPIDER-MAN'S SIZE!
SAY! PARKER'S AWAY FOR ONCE! I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT!
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AND YOU TRIED TO GET THE BRAIN'S ANSWER TO SPIDER-MAN'S IDENTITY AWAY FROM ME! IT ALL TIES IN, DOESN'T IT?
KNOCK IT OFF, BOOKWORM! YOU'RE IMAGINING THINGS! I'M NOT SPIDER-MAN!
BUT EVEN IF YOU WERE, YOU'D STILL DENY IT, WOULDN'T YOU?
THAT COULD BE WHY YOU LOST THE FIGHT TO PARKER! SO NOBODY WOULD SUSPECT WHO YOU REALLY ARE!
SURE! EVERYONE KNOWS YOU COULD BEAT PUNY PARKER IN YOUR SLEEP!
BUT-- I CAN'T-- THAT IS, I MEAN-- I'M NOT--
HA! IF THEY KEEP IT UP, FLASH'LL START BELIEVING HIMSELF!
LATER, A LIGHT-HEARTED PETER PARKER RUTHLY WALKS HOME FROM SCHOOL, HAPPILY LOST IN HIS OWN THOUGHTS...
TOMORROW, I'LL SAY I LOST THE PAPER WITH SPIDER-MAN'S IDENTITY ON IT DURING ALL THE EXCITEMENT! SO THAT'S THAT!
AS FOR FLASH, I MANAGED TO WALLOP HIM WITHOUT GIVING MYSELF AWAY! ALL IN ALL, IT'S BEEN A MIGHTY PLEASANT DAY!
DON'T GO AWAY, FRIENDS! MORE THAN AGE FUN FOLLOWS AS SPIDER-MAN MAKES IT UP WITH THAT OTHER YOUTHFUL SENSATION, THE
the END

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Mort Weisinger was the kind of training you couldn't get anywhere else. You can't get that in college. It's pretty much unique. There are very few people in comics who can claim to have has as many years of training as I had, working closely with two biggies like Stan and Mort Weisinger. Almost no one.

CF: Now that you're a biggie do you offer that kind of training to other people?

Shooter: I certainly try to. I certainly try to pass along everything I picked up.

CF: What is your literary background? Do you have any input from movies, TV or literature?

Shooter: I don't watch television at all. I watch a few football games. I don't go to movies too much. Not that I don't like movies, I just don't seem ever to have time. I end up reading a huge amount of screenplays, as part of the job. We're always getting screenplays sent to us to look at for possible adaptation. Like I say, when I was a kid, I pretty much stopped reading comics when I was eight, but I was a voracious reader. I read everything that wasn't nailed down. You know, cereal boxes, newspapers, soup cans, classics, anything that had words in it. I read a lot of books. I read a huge number of books between first grade and high school.

CF: Do you have any favorite authors?

Shooter: No. I like a lot of them.

CF: What has kept you in it?

Shooter: I went in it out of desperation. What can you do when you're 13 years old? You can't get a job in the Steel Mill, you can only make so much money selling newspapers. I figured that the only thing I could do would be to make something and sell it. I didn't know how to weave baskets. The only thing I had was a moderate drawing ability, and a belief that I had a moderate writing ability. So I did the only thing I could see that I could do at that point.

I've sort of awakened to the fact that we have something unique here. We've got a creative field that, for whatever reason, is not burdened with all the many problems of the other creative fields. If someone walks into my office today and they say they've got a great idea, "We'll do a comic book about..." I say, "Fine, okay good. Let's do it." You don't have to have committees, and many layers of management approvals, and it isn't dissected and there aren't networks to screw it up...It's really a place where you can go and you can create something and have a reasonable expectation of it coming out like what you intended. There is such a spontaneity. There's just an incredible electricity about this thing and the way it's set up. Maybe it's just because we're still small enough so that we're not subject to the kind of pressures that the TV people are and the movie people are. One of the reasons television is all so homogenized is because everyone is afraid to become different 'cause they want to do something like something else that worked. We're not like that. We don't have to be like that and that philosophy has paid off better for us. If you blow it on a comic book you may be out thousands of dollars, but that's **thousands**. If you blow it on a major motion picture you may be out millions. So I'm sure the people who are investing millions therefore are more of a nuisance, because they're worried about their millions. Hey look, I can relate to that, but I really like it **here**, where I don't have to worry about someone looking over my shoulder. I've never had any executives from upstairs come down and say, "Hey, do this," or "Don't do this." The common belief is that merchandising people come down and make demands or give orders. No--that never happens. Sometimes they ask me something nicely and I usually say no. I'm always amused when I get these letters with these kind of paranoid fantasies of what goes on here or why something was done. We're almost always doing the best we can. If it doesn't come out right it's because we don't have the time or the people or something else necessary to do it right. A lot of fans perceive all kinds of enemy actions that just aren't there.

Now, do you want a list of what's wrong? What's wrong is kind of a flip side of the same coin. Because it's a business which is still not a huge money business, We make money the old fashioned way--in relatively small amounts, a little at a time.. We're enormously successful, but we're small. We're a small company. There's a difference between a small company succeding and Warner Comunications succeding. I'm sure that movie companies count their profits in the millions and the hundreds of millions of dollars. We're on a very small level. For the amount of money that's invested in this, and it's very cash intensive, we don't make over much. An enormous amount of money that has to be invested to make a comic book, so a comic book when it's sold,

has got to make that money back first, before it's even profitable. We are profitable on everything we publish, but title by title we count our profits in thousands, not millions. What that means is that you have a very limited number of people you can have on staff and so forth. You might want to do something spectacular and the money isn't there. I'm sure if you go out to Lucas Films you can count hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people. One guy's whole job is to turn the switch on and another guy's whole job is to make sure no one comes through that door. There is no lack of personnel. The resources there to fine tune everything. They can still screw it up, but it's not for lack of resources. Now with us, because this is such a small business -- it's just like a small business man who owns a grocery store and finds himself doing his own little repairs, and painting the place

"My method of preserving spontaneity is to simply not make rules."

himself and doing all the maintenance jobs and everything himself. That comes with being a small business. It's not like the A & P where he can bring in a crew of painters. We have a situation here where each editor is in charge of six - eight books. Most magazines have a big staff of people for just one magazine. I don't think comic books are substantially easier to put together than other kinds of magazines. It isn't easy to get everything right no matter how hard you try. And if we publish a clinker, some people say, "This book is terrible and it's because you don't care." I hate it when they presume our motives. So okay, they're right, it's terrible, it's not good. The reason is Denny took his first vacation in two years. He went away for a week and was as one with the Rocky Mountains. And the book didn't get the attention it deserved. You're right, this went wrong and that went wrong and there was no one here to fix it. It's not because we don't care. It's because Denny would have died if he hadn't gone to the Rockie Mountains to be one with nature. This business has all kinds of little irritations like that, little problems. I think that since I've been here, thanks to me [laughter] and thanks to a lot of cooperation I've gotten from people upstairs, that we've largely overcome a lot of these problems, and we're making things better all the time. I'm trying to preserve the spontaneity and preserve the kind of seat-of-the-pants way we fly around here and get rid of the down side, get rid of the limitations that have been imposed by the fact that this is still a small business. I think a trap that you can fall into when things are running pretty well, things are selling and you're making money, the temptation is to get very conservative. Like, "Okay, now we've got to be real careful." That's what happened to DC years ago.

CF: So that we have Superman perpetually frozen in a

"I want to keep everyone feeling they can walk in with anything and get it listened to and maybe it will be done."

cast of unchanging characters.

Shooter: Superdog, and Supermonkey and Superhorse and this and that. That's a huge mistake. I don't want to have that. I want to avoid it.

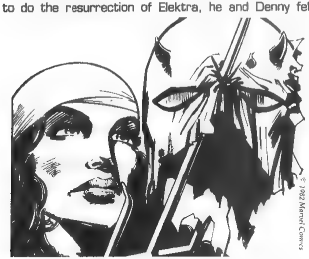
CF: Peter Parker doesn't even own a pet spider yet, after all these years.

Shooter: If he does it will be a big joke. We'll do it in a way that will fit in character. It will be something he would do.

CF: What is your method of preserving spontaneity?

Shooter: My method of preserving spontaneity is to simply not make rules. I don't make rules. I analyzed everything Stan told me and everything Mort told me and everything I learned in years of looking into things myself and analyzing everything I saw and read. I've come up with priorities, which are **not** rules. Basically, my theory is to keep an open mind. When somebody has an idea, they need not just set it aside because they think, "Oh, I know they won't like that." Maybe we will like it. I want to keep everyone feeling they can walk in with anything and get it listened to and maybe it will be done. Here's a for instance: I personally think that if a character dies, to me, that's just pretty irrevocable. I think it's important that we have a credible universe and I don't see a whole lot of people jumping up after they die. I mean dead. I'm not talking about a guy whose heart stops for a couple of minutes, and they bring him back. I'm talking about, you know, dead. So, I generally frown upon the concept of when the character has died that you should bring them back. Don't confuse this with the fact that when the villain falls into the volcano he'll be back next issue for

sure. That's different. Maybe the guy has a teleporter on his belt or I don't know what he had. If we don't see him die, who knows? But, I think if we establish that a character has died, that is a fact of enormous importance. And it should be treated with respect. It should be treated as if it were real. I've conveyed that at various times to the editors here—so—when Frank Miller wanted to do the resurrection of Elektra, he and Denny felt



obliged to ask me about it. They came in and said, "We want to know what you think of this before we do it." So they told me all about the story they had planned. They said, "We want to bring back Elektra." I said, "How are you going to do that?" And he explained it to me and it made sense. It convinced me, I could get behind it. It **worked**. If it works, if it's good, then it should be done. It shouldn't be prevented from being done because of some stupid rule. The point of what I'm telling you here is that resurrecting dead characters is one thing I'm **really** disinclined to do—but when someone pitched a resurrection story that was good, and made sense, I said okay. There is no rule. It's just that I want it to be good. I want it to make sense. When anybody brings in anything I'm ready to hear it; I'm ready to listen to it. Some people have brought in some wild stuff. And those people tend

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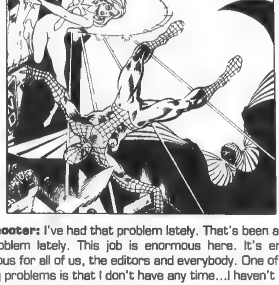
to be everybody's favorite artists and writers. Usually when their wild ideas hit the book shelf, everybody likes it, and everybody goes crazy over it and everybody writes fan mail. Most people who are **not** free with ideas are the ones that are having the trouble.

CF: How much attention do you pay to fan mail?

Shooter: I read each and every letter. I read every piece of mail. Everyone here will open and read every single letter addressed to him or her. I swear up and down in the Bull Pen page that I don't reply to any, but I do reply to some. There are some that I can not let go. Somebody has a question, and I say, "Oh, okay, 30 seconds..." and I write it on the back of a post card. I pay an awful lot of attention to fan mail. And submissions, submissions are always welcome here. And they're not opened by and screened by somebody down the hall. **I** open them and **I** read them. Maybe not the whole thing every time—sometimes I don't even have to go all the way through a plot to know it's not professional quality. I don't necessarily read every word of every plot, but I certainly read a big chunk of it. Enough to know. I think that's incredibly important. I think that the mail is our most direct communication with the readers. They're the guys that are buying these things; we ought to listen to what they say.

CF: How long a day do you work and how on Earth do you fit everything in?



Shooter: I've had that problem lately. That's been a big problem lately. This job is enormous here. It's enormous for all of us, the editors and everybody. One of my big problems is that I don't have any time...I haven't had a vacation really for a long time. I've stolen a couple of days here and there, but for maybe five...or seven years I haven't had a vacation. Last night at two a.m. I was still answering fan mail. It's going to be an all-work weekend because Denny went on vacation and I've got to take care of one of his books and that means working over the weekend. I've got to write a Bull Pen Bulletin over the weekend, a Bull Pen Buletin Special and a plot for **Team America**. That's more work than you can **fit** in a weekend. But I'll do the best I can. A while back, I was away for a couple days, I went to Atlantic City. I went there because a.) I needed a day off and b.) because I was meeting David Michelinie and Brett Breeding there to discuss business. They had a lot of stuff pending, they had ideas, they had questions about the Epic comics, and

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all kinds of things. So, I figured I'd combine the discussions with a day off. But when I come back I have a 16 inch high stack of art submissions. And I have another stack of plots—a small hill actually. They're hard to stack because they usually come in small envelopes. I've got a mountain of stuff here.

CF: What does go on there as far as the procedure? Say in producing a comic or, from your point of view of running a line, how does your day go?

Shooter: I really try to stay out of everyone's way and let them create. I really do confine my input to fundamentals and helpful advice and being available to help with problems, and give sort of broad general direction type of stuff. In general, I figure that I hired eight of the best editors I know of and if I stay out of their way and give them what they need to operate, then they'll do just fine. We have meetings and I tell them what I think — and I go over their stuff **after** it's in print. If I read every book before it went out, that's a real different psychology then if they know they're the last word. They're responsible. They're doing it, they're in charge of it and they know it. It's going to be whatever they say and if it's not right I'll tell them later. "Aw, gee, you really shouldn't have done that. That's not good because of this or that..." Okay, then they'll get it right next time. I think there's some stuff that gets into print that isn't perfect or that I could have made better if I could have picked up a mistake or a spelling error or something like that if I'd read it before it went out, but I really feel that I'd rather not inhibit anybody. I'd rather have them feel—I'm talking about writers, artists and editors—that what they do is given that respect. Whatever they do is really good and if there's something not exactly right about it, we'll get it on the next one. I think that's important. I'm in charge of all the comics and all the regular publications here. A lot of my days are all administrative kinds of stuff, unfortunately. I'd really rather just kind of bury my nose in comics, but it's important that I represent all the artists, writers, editors, correction people and creative people of all kinds to the **company**—and I represent the company to them. So a lot of my days are involved with doing what I can to get anything they need for them. I deal with Jim Galton who is the president of the company and Mike Hobson who is the vice president in charge of publishing, and hopefully I come away from those guys with policies that I can represent to the creative people. If they say, "We're spending too much money, cut all the rates in half," they're going to have to get someone else to represent that point of view. But they've never yet put me in an untenable position. They've never asked me to represent anything bad or unfair. I've been very effective so far—I've been very good at getting what we need to operate and very good in terms of their point of view, in getting the best creative people, and keeping the best creative people and sustaining the creative effort and keeping it running and running well. In other words, I've served both the company and the creative people, I think, pretty well. That may sound surprising—because people have been conditioned to believe that Management people are evil exploiters and that creative people are

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oppressed victims. That's not true—here at least. At Marvel, we're of the opinion that the company and the creators are in this **together**—and that it is possible—make that **essential**—that we work together for our mutual benefit. Nothing that hurts creators can, in the long run, help Marvel. Nothing that hurts Marvel, in the long run, is truly beneficial to creators. The last three years have—each year succeeding has been the best year we've ever had. What I do is I say, "Okay, this is what I need." And I've gotten it. These people are great people, Jim Galton and Mike Hobson and the other people around here I deal with. They don't always understand everything that goes on in the Bullpen with the comics and everything like that, but they've been extremely cooperative. Years ago, if something went wrong, some people who occupied this chair found it easier to say, "Well it's Cadence's fault." They passed the buck—just blamed things on the parent corporation rather than trying to fix them. So when I took this job, I expected there to be corporate ogres that I would go talk to who would say "Captain Marvel has to be green this month." I never found any of those people; all I found were people who were absolutely eager for someone to tell them what should be done. "Tell us what to do; we'll do it!" So I said, "Well, we need this and that," and they said "Okay, here you go." Usually, what I asked for—raises for the talent, more editors, whatever—worked out. And everytime I got good results the people upstairs were even more eager to try to cooperate with me and give me what I needed the next time I asked. I never ran into any ogres. I ran into some people who didn't understand what I was talking about sometimes and I had to

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explain it, and people who occasionally had a slightly different point of view on the subject, and they'd say, "Hey wait a minute. That won't work. Will it?" But in general, I've never had the antagonism that I was told to expect. I now believe that all that stuff about upstairs being the enemy was just a cop out. That was a lie. That was what people said so they didn't have to work. It was easier to just pawn off the blame on some non-existent people then it was to get stuff done. I don't understand the origin of that. All I know is that I've had nothing but cooperation, as much as you could possibly expect. We are dealing with people here—I mean they're not just going to automatically agree with everything I say. But they are reasonable. Dealing with them is a big part of my job. It's unfortunate that it's a big part of my job because I'd rather deal with the creative things. But, somebody has to do this and I feel I'm qualified to do this sort of dual role thing.

CF: Do you want to make any comments on the shake-ups in staff recently?

Shooter: Are you talking about Doug Moench?

CF: Yeah, and someone else - an inker or a letterer?

Shooter: As far as I know Doug was the only one who left. The rumor was that Gene Day was quitting and Bill Sienkiewicz was quitting...none of that was true. Doug and I disagreed about Master Kung Fu and in the end—he decided to go elsewhere. Everybody here has standing offers—I mean if you work for Marvel it's like playing for the Yankees, you can always go to other teams. Virtually everyone who works here has a standing offer from DC, and they're always getting letters from Pacific Comics and letters from First Comics. We're number one and

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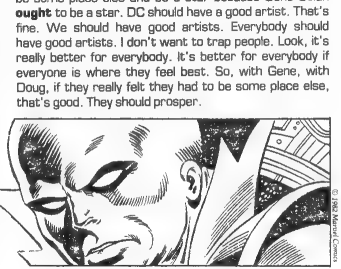
"If you work for Marvel it's like working for the Yankees, you can always go to other teams. Virtually everyone who works here has a standing offer from DC."

everyone is always after us. So if someone really feels that they're upset by something or they think we're wrong or something like that, they can go elsewhere. With Doug, I'd been talking to the editor of Master Kung Fu for a long time, it's Ralph Macchio—and I felt that there were things in it that were—kind of the same every issue. It was not as good as it could be. I'm interested in things being exciting and moving. I'm not interested in getting into stagnation. I saw it on Master Kung Fu. It seemed like—you know, I pick up an issue from a year ago and I pick up an issue now and it's pretty much the same. So I said, "Well look, why don't you get Doug to come up with some way to jazz it up. To come up with some way to—to do what ever it is he's always wanted to do and was afraid we'd say no. To go crazy and to come up with some ideas. The sky is the limit. The title is **Master Kung Fu**, it doesn't even have to be the same guy, you can do anything. Tell Doug, "Look, why don't you come up with crazy and weird and let's do it." If I was a writer, I think I would have been excited by the concept. I would have said, "Wow, what an opportunity!" Of course if he created something we would have paid him for it, many thousands of dollars. Then he would get the creator's piece of the incentive payment. There would be a lot of benefit to it. I also said, "Look, if you don't want to create something for us then, you know, maybe we can get someone else to do it and you can still write it." The editors on the book agreed entirely with me. They said, "Yeah, you're right. We really feel that same way." So they called Doug, and Doug didn't agree at all. Doug thought MOKF was just fine; he liked it just the way it was. He thought we were crazy. So after they talked to him for a while they said, "Jim maybe you better talk to him." So I talked to Doug and I told him the same things. He didn't understand why I wanted to mess with it. I told him, "I'll mess with anything. I don't want there to be sacred cows that you can't mess with. I want brilliant ideas! I want things to move and develop. People like that. He interpreted what I said to mean that I was going to kill off all of our characters, and told everyone so. That's not true. I don't have any particular plans for any characters. I'm here to listen. If anybody comes in with a great plan for Spider-Woman or Master Kung Fu or Thor or anything, I'm here. That's what I feel the job is. Doug, after talking to me said he'd think about it and then the next day he quit. I really haven't even heard who he's working for yet. I guess DC; I have no idea. So anyway, I called in the editors and I said, "If Doug is going to leave, is that going to put anyone in a bind?" No, no one was in a bind. Everyone had lots of people and writers assigned to the book to pick up where Doug was leaving. It's probably one of those deals when it's the best for all involved. I felt the same way about Gene Colan. He was having trouble here working with a number of the writers. It's a shame for a man as talented as Gene Colan, as brilliant as Gene Colan, who has been doing this for thirty years, to not be able to produce the kind of work the writers he's working with can accept. I'd rather have Gene Colan be some place else and be a star because Gene Colan **ought** to be a star. DC should have a good artist. That's fine. We should have good artists. Everybody should have good artists. I don't want to trap people. Look, it's really better for everybody. It's better for everybody if everyone is where they feel best. So, with Gene, with Doug, if they really felt they had to be some place else, that's good. They should prosper.



(The publishers of Comics Feature *also publish a companion title,* Comics News. *We contacted Jim Shooter to do a brief interview about the creation of* US 1 *for the first issue of CN. During the course of that interview he told us some very interesting details about how he approaches a book and about what he feels makes for good comics. Most of this material was beyond the scope of the article which ran in CN. Feeling the material too good not to print it appears here for the first time only deleting those sections immediately relevent only to* US 1.*)*

"Team America simply was not a well executed book. It wasn't good. If it had turned out to be what it was intended to be I think it would have been good."

Shooter: Everything we've done has gone well. Marvel hasn't had a comic book which lost money in about four years. We're in the very comfortable position of being able to try things without much worries. Basically my Editor-In-Chief posture here is that there's nothing too outrageous. One of the criticisms that has been leveled at Marvel and at comics in general is that there tends to be an awful lot of super heroes and not a lot of anyghing else. So if somebody comes along with something different, even if I suspect it may not be the most popular thing to ever come along, I feel we should try it because it's different. And if it is something that catches on and takes off great, but if it isn't, that's okay too. It's something we should have tried anyway.

CF: Has Marvel found a problem with vehicle oriented books such as **Team America** or the **Ghost Rider**?

Shooter: I think the really big factor is trying to get stories that are well executed. The problem with **Team America** had nothing to do with motorcycles or lack of motorcycles or anything else, but it simply was not a well executed book. It wasn't good. If it had turned out to be what it was intended to be I think it would have been very good.

CF: Didn't you have a hand in the writing of the earlier issues of **Team America**?

Shooter: They asked me if I would come up with some sort of book involving a motorcycle team. Why? Because Ideal Toys had a set of motorcycle toys and they wanted us to do a story or a series of books about motorcycles that they would tie into their advertising. People come to us all the time with all kinds of outrageous ideas. For instance, the Smurfs. They came to us with the Smurfs four times before we finally took it. Each time they came to us we said, "Oh no, we really can't do it." After the Smurfs were on television and were very popular we finally said, "Okay, we'll do it. We'll do it as a whole seperate thing for the younger market," because at that time we had Marvel Books. We used to distribute coloring books and stuff like that, so we actually had somewhere to sell the Smurf books. Like the Smurfs, we have people come to us all the time with things they want us to do or they'd like us to try or whatever. You guys out there never hear about the ones I turn down. I've never been over-ruled. No one has ever said, "Well, we're going to do it anyway," because the people here respect my opinion. So, how do I make a decision. Some toy company calls up and says, "Hey, we've got these motorcycle things. You want to do a deal together?"

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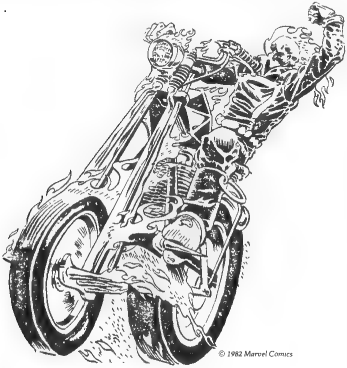

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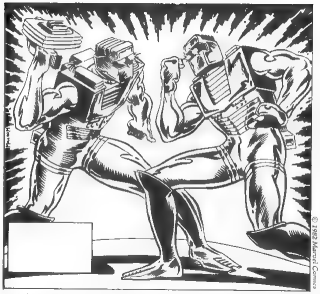
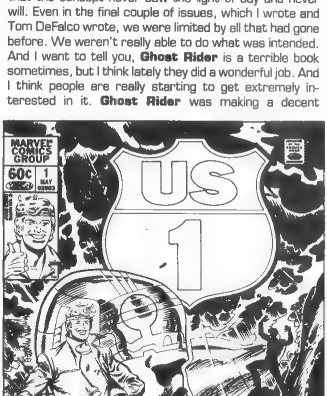


We've walked away from a hell of a lot of those deals because we don't need them. We don't need them at all. We make our money publishing. We don't need to make deals with outsiders. The way you make money in publishing is you publish something good that people want to read and they want to buy. Which brings us back to how I make the decisions. The decision is made when they say, "Can you do something with this?" My question always is, "What am I stuck with?" A lot of times they'll say, "Well, the creature is this and he's that..." and I say, "No, thank you. I'm not interested." But if they say, "All I've got is this robot. Just a robot. Can you do anything?" We'll do anything you say." And I sit back and I say, "Hey, maybe we can." We can come up with a good story. The only limitation is that it's about a robot. It seems like we should be able to do this. If we're not stuck with it, then why not? With Team America, they sent us motorcycles and said we could do anything. So I said, "Let's see if we can come up with something." So I hired a guy, paid him a lot of money—Ed Hannigan—and Ed and I came up with the concept. I tell you, we showed that concept to a lot of people, and they were jumping around about it; they loved it. The TV people out in California said, "Oh this is great, we want to do a show about it." I said, "Well you can't do a show because the name **Team America** is a trade mark of the toy company and there's rules that prevent that." A lot of people saw it, a lot of people liked it, a lot of people thought it was very good. I didn't have time to write it myself. I got people to do it who I thought could do it. Mike Vosburg from Detroit, who knows something about cars and Dave Kraft, who is a motorcyclist and who I thought was knowledgeable about racing. Just before the first issue went out I asked to see it. I usually don't look at things until after they're in print because I like my editors to really feel like they have a free hand, and then I'll criticize and say what they should do next time. They gave it to me and it wasn't what I wanted and it bore no resemblance what-so-ever to what I had intended. I didn't like it at all. They clearly had no concept of what I had intended for the series. As it turned out, Dave rode motorcycles but he was not trying to be real. Instead of trying to be realistic, he kind of took the opposite path. And Mike didn't have the background in motorcyles and racing that I thought he did. Anyway, it wasn't right; it was wrong. So I had a whole crew of people who basically stayed up day and night, three days in a row, literally working twenty-four hours, taking bits and pieces from what Dave and Mike had done and recreating it. I want to tell you, it wasn't the best thing ever done. It wasn't even close to what we'd intended it to be, but it was a lot better and a lot closer than it was before we started. This put us so far behind schedule, so far behind, that we had to publish some issues that were only intended to be give aways for the toy company. And we killed it. So whose fault was it? Well, everything that goes wrong around here is my fault. I screwed up, I mad a terrible decision. But the one decision I didn't think was wrong was deciding to do that book, because once they asked us to do it we thought about it, we worked on it, we came up with something and it was really terrific. It's really kind of disappointing that the concept never saw the light of day and never will. Even in the final couple of issues, which I wrote and Tom DeFalco wrote, we were limited by all that had gone before. We weren't really able to do what was intended. And I want to tell you, **Ghost Rider** is a terrible book sometimes, but I think lately they did a wonderful job. And I think people are really starting to get extremely interested in it. **Ghost Rider** was making a decent



amount of money. It was a sucessful book. It was one of our three worst selling titles, but if DC published it it probably would have been one of their top five. It was doing exceptionally well for anyone else, but you've always got to look at those bottom three titles and think

about it, because there's something you should be doing. Or can we do something else with the time and money and effort that would be more successful? So anyway, it's not that **Ghost Rider** was a failure; the fact is that **Ghost Rider** wasn't a failure; the fact is that every time we put one of the issues of **Ghost Rider** out it did well. There were times when the book didn't deserve to do well, it wasn't that good, and it really kind of deserved to fail. And the same thing applies to **Team America**; it had an audience that it reached that just loved it to death. I got letters from people that said, "This is my favorite book." I get a lot of letters from kids from Spanish/American descent who like the character Wolf and therefore it's their favorite book. Who'd have believed it? It didn't deserve to be their favorite book. So I think it shows the opposite. I think the vehicle thing is possibly an asset. But I don't care about that stuff. I know that if **Ghost Rider** had been done well for a long time it would have been a hit. Just like **Daredevil**. People used to think of **Daredevil** and **Ghost Rider** as one and the same. They were second class books. That was the wisdom of the previous administration here: "Well, there are first class books and there are second class books." Horse shit. They're all first class books. If they would stop thinking of it as a second class book. They had just decided that this would always be sort of a second stringer. Well, Frank [Miller] started really putting himself into it and, my God, it took off and now it's one of the top selling books.

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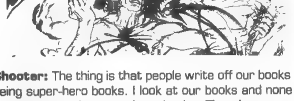
CF: As the largest comic book publisher, why doesn't Marvel try to break new ground?

Shooter: I think we've done that quite a bit. I've heard people say, "Oh yeah, Marvel, all they do is super heroes." Well, look at our line.

CF: Everything is either super heroes, science fiction or fantasy. There is very little in the way of a romance book or a western book or a war book...

"When someone comes into me with fire in their eyes, and they say, 'I've got it!' and they explain it to me and they convince me that it's great, that's what we're going to go with."



Shooter: The thing is that people write off our books as being super-hero books. I look at our books and none of them seem to be super-hero books. There's some guy and lightning strikes him and he has powers and he immediately feels that he has to go out and patrol the city. We don't do any of that stuff. All of our characters have some kind of motivation...

CF: But they're still super hero books just with a little better motivated protegonists in them.

Shooter: I guess it depends on your point of view. I mean, I look at Ka-Zar and...

CF: And still Ka-Zar is not a typical person involved in a romantic situation.

Shooter: This is another book I perceive as being different, and if they fail, no problem...

CF: By romance books I mean straight forward...

Shooter: I agree. At the moment we're not doing any straight forward romance titles. I also say that we have made many attemots to be different. I look around and I don't see any two the same.

CF: I agree with you to a point. Your books aren't all stamped out of a cookie cutter. I'm glad to see that there is going to be a Kid Colt mini-series.

Shooter: Oh yeah.

CF: So when are you bringing back Nick Fury and Shield?

Shooter: It would be very easy for me to get a bunch of guys and say I'm going to do Shield, I'm going to do romance and off they go. But that's terrible; that's not good. The way to do it is the way I did in **US 1** and the way I did **Team America** and that isn't to get a guy and say, "Say, are you interested, can you come up with something?" And the guy says yeah, and he comes back and we say, "Fine, we don't want to do it. Here's your money. Thank you very much." The way to do it is when the guy comes in here on his own. When someone comes into me with fire in their eyes, and they say, "I've got it!"

and they explain it to me and they convince me that it's great; that's what we're going to go with. That's how it should be. My door is open right now. My door is always open. And when somebody comes in here and says, "Jim, I want to do a war issue," and he's all excited about it and it's something I can get excited about and get interested in, we're going to do it. I want to wait 'till the right one comes along. We've got a responsibility to try outrageous things.

CF: Do the tastes of the fans change?

Shooter: I always feel that a lot of that is really not very well considered. I've seen it happen that really incredible artists, artists that you **know** are going to be the fans' favorites—artists like Garcia Lopez—and he doesn't make it to the top. I've seen it happen where someone sort of gets discovered. Yesterday they were nobody and now they're big news. And I think the key to it is that it's **good** stuff. It's almost sincerety, it's almost caring, when they see the kind of detail, the kind of attention to what's going on and a real -- you know, back in the old days, the thing that made Ditko my favorite artist was that the physics worked. When Spiderman spun a web, it looked the way it would look. I thought, "If somebody did that, that's what it would look like." It really doesn't matter who they are, if they're doing a good job people are going to realize it. You can't really make any kind of generalization. What I'm saying is, I refuse to make decisions on anything except whether or not the stuff is good. I admit that some things don't work out. Generally it's not that

"Writer artists occasionally are a very good solution. It's often the best solution if you've got a guy who's really good. But there are a lot of writers who can't draw and a lot of artists who can't write. That's what editors do, they take artists and writers and make combinations that work."

the people aren't talented. Generally it's not even because the people don't care. Generally it's because something didn't match up right or something just isn't cooking or you've got the wrong inker with the wrong penciller or you've got the wrong penciller with the wrong writer. That happens. We had one thing recently which I think had superb artwork and had a very good writer, and they just weren't...The artist was saying, "I don't know, I'm not getting enough visual stuff to draw," and the

I PLANNED ON THIS! I KNOW THE SHADOW CABINET, EVEN THESE LOW-LEVEL THUGS, THESE "BOUNCERS" WHO KNOW NOTHING OF THE COYOTE WHO HAUNTS THEIR LEADERS' DREAMS, WOULD HAVE TO BE FORMIDABLE!
BUT COYOTE IS MOST ELY!
© 1984 Marvel Comics

writer was saying, "Gee, this is visual stuff and I'm getting back pictures that aren't quite right." All these guys are good. The thing was, what the writer was telling the artist was wrong, he apparently wasn't making clear to him, "These were supposed to be visually exciting pictures, pay attention." And the artist by the same token, would not read the writer right or the writer was failing to get it across to the artist and the artist would take the weakest point of view every time because the writer hadn't made it clear to him that this was supposed to be...

CF: Very often the very best work seems to come out of writer artists.

Shooter: Writer artist occasionally are a very good solution. It's often the best solution if you've got a guy who's really good. But there are a lot of writers who can't draw and a lot of artists who can't write. That's what editors do, they take artists and writers and make combinations that work. If it works it works real well. If it doesn't it looks like we're totally...fans out there, all they see is that the product isn't working and they say, "How come you do this?" Well, it's not as easy as it looks. We're trying. We'll get it better next time. Not that they should forgive us for that. They should not pay for it and they should write us angry letters. All that stuff is good. But what they shouldn't do is presume that we don't know any better. If they don't like it, we probably didn't either. The way I judge the success of a book - I don't look at the sales figures - I look at them, but that's not how I make my judgements. The comics are passed out around here and I watch. If everybody's pulling out **Daredevil** to read it first, I don't have to look at the sales figures, that's a hit. And even if it isn't, we should publish it anyway, because if it's **that** good that the guys here have to see what's happening this month, then it must be wonderful. I've never seen it fail because if it's a book that we like, then the world likes it.

Kurt Busiek

The Writer of Powerman Iron Fist Talks About Private Eyes

Shamus. Dick. Peeper. Hawkshaw. He has a lot of names, but under all of them, there's no mistaking the American hard-boiled private investigator. The private eye is one of the most recognizable characters in adventure fiction, from his trenchcoat, fedora and snub-nosed automatic to his long-suffering secretary. A private eye may be missing a few of the characteristics we have come to associate with the whole class, but it is incontestable that the American public has a very clear image of this fairly complex character. And yet the character is neither the province of a single writer (as with the jungle-hero--anyone who isn't Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan is secondary) nor of a legion of indestinguishable writers (as in revenge fiction, and the endless Perpetrators, Penetrators, Demolishers, and Whatevers). The hard-boiled private eye is the creation of a few men, who between them created a genre that has never been so strong as when it was formed.

The private eye finds his origins with the first true detective--Edgar Allan Poe's Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin, who made his first appearance in **"The Murders in The Rue Morgue,"** in 1841. Dupin bears little obvious resemblance to the archetype under discussion. He is a Frenchman, a declassed aristocrat, with little to do beyond following whatever intellectual pursuits might strike his fancy. He is an amateur detective--but of course, an unbelieveably talented one. His forte is deduction, and he demonstrates this skill by almost disinterestedly wandering into the scene of a crime after the police have either been stymied or have reached the wrong conclusion as to the solution of the crime, and merely by observing details that the police left unnoticed, is able to recreate the bizarre and obscure events that led up to the crime. He is intellect unleashed, and little more. In **"The Murders in The Rue Morgue,"** for example, he amuses himself by apparently reading his friend the narrator's mind, and then telling the astonished man the chain of events by which he was able to follow the narrator's train of thought from the

tion of his short stories, where he says, "For Joseph Thompson Shaw (an early editor of the magazine) with affection and respect, and in memory of the time when we were trying to get murder away from the upper classes, the weekend house party and the vicar's rose garden, and back to the people who are really good at it."

Black Mask was created by H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan in 1920. They were co-editors of **THE SMART SET**, (a magazine of high-society oriented stories, and they needed the money. So since the pulp magazine **DETECTIVE STORY** was doing well, they introduced a competeing title. It did well, although both editors thought it was "lousy" and they soon sold it for a sizeable profit. At first **BLACK MASK** featured the usual dry detective fare of the time, until the June 1, 1923 issue featured a story titled **"Knight of the Open Palm,"** by Carroll John Daly, which introduced a private eye named Race Williams. Williams, a tough, non-nonsense private detective as rough and crude as the crooks he captured (or killed) was a great success. His name on the cover of **BLACK MASK** was good for a 15% hike in sales, and the magazine printed "Williams" material as fast as Daly could turn it out.

Artistically, however, Race Williams was not such a paragon of success. the character could best be described as the result of good intentions and next to no technique. Daly was trying to bring a gutsier, more realistic feel to the detective story, but he did not, unfortunately , have an ear for dialogue. A typical paragraph might read like this one, from Daly's **"The Snarl of The Beast"**.

> "Mr. Williams – Race Williams." She was shaking me by the shoulders as she talked, her words coming in quick, spasmodic jerks. "I wasn't always bad. I have been dragged into a terrible net. Won't you believe me--spare me--not lift my mask? I'll never do anything to harm you, perhaps much to help you. You've seen people who wanted to be good dragged into the bad."

However, for all Daly's faults, race Williams did have many of the characteristics which are associated with the hard-boiled private eye, and Williams is the first of his breed. He exists in a world of crime and depravity, and is the outstanding moral force that the

victims rely on. One of his clients describes Williams as "playing the game against all the forces of evil--playing it alone." Williams is, in his way, a savior.

He is also extremely tough. Not only physically, in that he can be stabbed, shot, beaten, and drugged, and still come through in the end, but also mentally. At one point in **"Snarl of the Beast,"** he threatens to shoot a girl if she doesn't do as he says, and adds to the reader: "Did I mean it? Don't make me laugh. A fine story that would be to carry to the underworld. Why every lad who had a girl would send her gunning for me."

Williams shared the view with the later private eyes that the police are effective in their own way, but they are too tied up in procedure to be completely valuable, and that the legal structure and justice are not always compatible. Indeed, he embraces the "he got what was coming to him" ethic, where personal or interpersonal morality supercedes formal legal procedures. As he puts it, "it's results that count in life. You can't make ketchup without busting up a few tomatoes."

Williams was also a master (or at least a user) of the clever (or overly clever) simile, the sort of phrase that is irrevocably connected now with the private eyes, beacuse of its sarcastic colorfulness. Williams looks down a street "as empty as a congressman's head," for example, and describes a bight "cold enough to freeze the tail off a brass monkey and dark enough for the monkey not to miss it."

However, though Race Williams was in some ways the prototypical private detective, and certainly the first of his kind, he was soon accompanied in the pages of **BLACK MASK** by the first quality fiction of this new genre four months later. The new character had no name, although he would come to be known as the Continental Op, and the author was Dashiell Hammett.

Before turning to writing, Hammett had heid down quite a number of odd jobs, including a position as a detective with the Pinkerton Detective Agency. One of the most distinctive touches his experience brought to his writing was that he never glorified his detectives. They were tough men doing a gritty job, not glamorous super-heroes. And the world they functioned in was not a world of truth revealed, but of the lie exposed; a world where truth is almost never glimpsed, but another lie is always just aroud the corner. A typical **"Continental Op"** story, in fact, begins with a series of lies. The Op will be hired to look into something, and the first thing he'll do is talk to the nearest people that are involved. Innocent or guilty, he invariably discovers that they have lied to him. The Op then begins stirring things up, with only a vague purpose in mind if any. He arranges for those people who are avoiding each other to meet, and generally just keeps things popping while he gathers data which destroys the fabric of lies he's been told. This will uncover another set of lies, and the Op will continue, not to unravel, but to explode people's stories until he arrives at what actually happened. It is important to note that what actually happened seldom makes more sense than the lies told--in fact, it usually makes less. The thrust of the story, however, is not on the solution to the crime, but on the people involved and their tangled web of falsehood. Hammet's world is one where everyone has something to lie about, and everyone is eager to believe someone's lies, as long as it doesn't bother their own. The Op is the only one who doggedly runs the

observance of a passing fruiterer to the consideration of an actor of little stature.

However, though this "armchair" ratiocination bears little resemblance to the working methods of the familiar gumshoe, some of the themes and characteristics of the genre are discernable. Dupin is a moral force, as Poe saw it. The triumph of reason over the shadowy horror of the unknown was to Poe's mind the establishment of the purest moral force over an immoral chaos. Later writers would center around this same theme, although the results would be quite different, because of a different moral interpretation. Pure intellectualism, untainted by emotion, is more likely to be the area of expertise of a villian today, but to Poe, who dreamed of governing the nation through an intellectual hierarchy, glorifying the power of the mind, Dupin was perhaps the ultimate moral force.

Dupin was also a loner, like most private eyes. Poe's intellectual vision was rejected by the society around him, and as a reflection of this, Dupin is an outsider--unwanted because of his superiority. After Dupin has solved the murders in the Rue Morgue and freed the innocent suspect, and saved the Prefect of Police from hanging an innocent man that same Prefect "could not altogether conceal his chagrin at the turn which affairs had taken, and was fain to indulge in a sarcasm or two about the propriety of every person minding his own business." Dupin grandly ignores the Prefect's resentment, and lets him grumble, not deigning to take offense--because he is, after all, superior.

Poe continually has Dupin demonstrate his superiority over society and its officials, perhaps a way of striking back at their indifference to his perceived genius. In **"The Purloined Letter,"** Dupin outwits an unscrupulous politician, and of course the Prefect of Police is constantly outthough and confounded.

Another characteristic in Poe's detective work, noteable by its absence in the classic hard-boiled detective story, is the fact that the story is narrated by someone within the story who is not the narrator. This device allowed Poe to build suspense (as later detective narrators did simply by being "close-mouthed" about what they were thinking about), eliminate inessentials in the story, and perhaps most importantly, allow the reader to be shown how wonderful the detective is by the narrator's reaction to him. In Dupin's case, this reaction bordered on adulation. In one scene in **"The Murders in The Rue Morgue,"** Dupin is explaining the process by which he solved the murders, and Dupin comments: "I seem to be on the verge of comprehension without the power to comprehend--as men, at times, find themselves upon the brink of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember." While this passage does lend an air of stunning intellectual competence to Dupin, it does make the narrator seem rather stupid, a fault with this sort of narration which is demonstrated more clearly in the works of Poe's successor in the chain leading to the hard-boiled private eye, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

While the mystery tradition in England was started by Wilkie Collins's **THE MOONSTONE** twenty years before the first appearance of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes (in 1888), it is Holmes who most clearly follows Dupin. Although "scientific detection" is how Holmes describes his working method, it really boils down to the same careful observation and deduction that Dupin used. Again, Holmes trumps everyone in sight, belittleing their feeble mental processes by his invariably correct decipherings of complicated chains of events. None are so often and clearly upstaged, however, as Doyle's narrator, Mr. Watson. As time wears on, one stops seeing the comparison between Holmes and Watson as a demonstration of Holmes' talents, but merely as proof that Watson is a complete duffer. Still, Holmes is a walking testimonial to the power of rational thought.

That is where Holmes begins to differ from Dupin. Although Holmes bears all the earmarks of a rebel--his use of drugs, his passion for secrecy and solitude, and his moods of depression--he is not treated as one. He is accepted into the uppercrust of British society, and those people who are intellectually trounced by Holmes are not resentful, as Poe's Prefect was (excepting for some of the villians, of course), but admiring. Holmes has it both ways--a situation that became established in British detective fiction, with its tradition of respected, uppercrust sleuths.

Holmes' major contribution to the American private eye, however, was his city. Sherlock Holmes' London, shrouded in fog, holding mysterious evils at every turn, was a perfect interno for a moral paragon to pit himself against. The image of Holmes, striding through the dim London night, unafraid of and unharmable by the corrupt denizens of the alleyways and seedy dockside lodgings thanks to his moral worth-- which was expressed by his mental and physical capability to penetrate even the most obscure corners of that foggy metropolis and lay bare the evils within-- is as powerful as it is not only because of Holmes, but because of the atmosphere around him--an atmosphere the Americans would modify and put to good use.

In America, the detective genre existed, but there was little to it but more Holmesian and assorted upperclass types enjoying their intellectual pursuits through blood and gore, until the early 1920s, and the appearance of a magazine entitled **BLACK MASK**, possibly the single most important publication in terms of its effect on the American detective story. Raymond Chandler points out **Black Mask**'s contribution in a dedication to a colle

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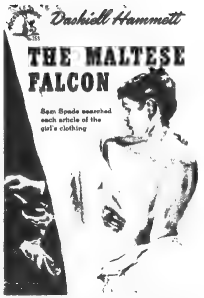
truth to ground--because it's his job. He is not on some moral crusade, or vengeance driven, he is merely doing his job. The few times he does get personally involved in a case, it turns out sour, either because he finds that a friend of his is involved in the crimes (**"The Dain Curse"**) or that he is beginning to enjoy the brutal, violent methods he employs to learn the truth, and that scares him (**"Red Harvest"**).

Hammet's language, as The Op narrates the tales, is percise and clean and manages to put alot in a few words. One of the Op's antagonists enters like so: "He didn't wait for an invitation. He was through the doorway before I had the door half opened. He glared at me. There was plenty of him!" The man is then described as "a big, red-faced, red-haired bale of a man--big in any direction you measured him--and none of him was fat." A battle begins as follows, just as the lights go out:

"Darkness--streaked with orange and blue--filled with noise. My arms had Maurois. We crashed down on dead Billie. I twisted around, kicking the Frenchman's face. Loosened one arm, caught one of his. His other hand gouged at my face. That told me the bag was in the one I held. Clawing fingers tore my mouth. I put my teeth in them and kept them there. One of my knees was on his face. I put my weight on it. My teeth still held his hand. Both my hands were free to get the bag.

Not nice work, this, but effective."



This is not the sort of precise, well-crafted prose that Hammett uses to create a seamy dirty world where everything is hiding behind a lie. It's not as attractive as Conan Doyle's London, but it isn't meant to be.

The cheap, tacky atmosphere of the Continental Op's Southern California made Dashiell Hammet into a literary name. But it wasn't the Op who pulled it off--he made Hammett into a financial success, but the critical success came along in 1930, along with Sam Spade, a detective who didn't share the Op's detachment from the lies and deciet, and as a result, was nearly destroyed by them.

Spade, incidentally, was the first of the private eyes to have a much put-upon secretary, Miss Effie Perine. But more important to **"The Maltese Falcon"** was Sam Spade's personality. He wasn't a rational, thinking, cool-headed detective. He was more like displaced cowboy.

The western heroes, with their courage, stength, toughness, integrity, loyalty, incorruptibility, and rugged individualism, had a distinctly American character that couldn't be matched by the European coolness of Holmes and Dupin. However, with the dissapearance of the American West, these heroes had to either be relegated to period pieces, or begin to test their vitues in civilizatibn, in lieu of the vanishing wilderness.

However, the American cities are far less open than the West, whether it be the west of Wild Bill Hickock or the earlier West of James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales. The modern American hero finds himself forced to either adopt the values of civilization--which can be corrupt and unpleasant-- or because of his moral impulses, oppose them, although it will make him an outsider in his own city. Also, the western hero is no longer capable of reforming the society with his own moral stance--the best he can do is to avoid being corrupted and preserve his own honor and integrity, while he accomplishes whatever he set out to do.

Sam Spade is very like a western hero stuck in the big city, who is tough enough to take it, but doesn't quite comprehend what "it" is. And in the course of **"The Maltese Falcon"** he finds out. He matches wits against the villains of the urban scene, and fights for both love and money. He loses nearly everything. The prize he fought for, the Maltese Falcon, turns out to have been a fake all along. And Brigidn O'Shaughnessy, his lover, turns out to be a murderess, and his code of honor causes Spade to renege on his love and loyalty, and turn her over to the police. He tries to explain why:

> "Listen. This isn't a damn bit of good. You'll never understand me, but I'll try once more and then we'll give it up. Listen. When a man's partner is killed, he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him. He was your partener and your supposed to do something about it.

Spade is not a very nice man. He has slept with his partner's wife, he refuses to cooperate with the poilce except when it suits him, and he is cavalier and nasty about everything. When the police do try to get information out of him, he laughs at them because he knows they know what he won't tell them, and they can't get it from him. He also enjoys being cruel. He allows Wilmer, the arch-criminal Gutman's stooge, to force him to come back to the hotel to see Gutman. At the last moment, he swipes Wilmer's guns and goes into Gutman's suite, saying "Come on. This will put you in solid with your boss." Later, he discusses the upcoming betrayal of Wilmer in front of the gunsel's face. He does a lot of laughing at other people's expenses. But for all that, he does have a code of honor--one he doesn't quite understand. Although he loves Brigid, he has to turn her over to the police, because

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she killed his partner, a man he despised. He rationalizes his decision by saying he can't trust her, and she's just setting him up to take the fall for him, but what it comes down to is that he can not remain the man he is and let her go unpunished.

And his decision costs him. More than just the personal anguish it causes him, his decision does not fit the values of the city, as seen in the novel's last scene, after he tells his secretary what he's done:

> Her voice was as queer as the expression on her face. "You did that, Sam, to her?"
>
> He nodded. "Your Sam's a detective." He looked sharply at her. He put his arm around her waist, his hand on her hip. "She did kill Miles, angel," he said gently, "offhand, like that." He snapped the fingers of his other hand.
>
> She escaped from his arm as if it had hurt her. "Don't, please, don't touch me," she said brokenly. "I know--I know you're right. You're right. But don't touch me now--not now."

Spade is rejected for doing the right thing. He is a loner, not by nature, but by morals. His world will forever hurt him because he is who he is.

Hammett also created Nick and Nora Charles of **THE THIN MAN**, who make a valuable addition to the world of the private detective, but are not so important as spade or another, similar private eye who came along in **BLACK MASK** again in 1939. Philip Marlowe, the creation of Raymond Chandler, added something to te western archetype that allowed him to survive where Spade had not. Marlowe has compassion, pity, and a sensitivity to ethics. He knew why he did what he did. Spade just did it.

Marlowe's sensibility put him a cut above the standard **BLACK MASK** heroes. He still dealt with the roughest elements of society, but he aproached them with a new attitude. His hard-boiledness was a mask over a satiric and sometimes poetic mind, as can be seen in the opening paragraph to **THE BIG SLEEP**.

> "It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills. I was wearing my powder-blue suit, with dark blue shirt, tie and display handkerchief, black brogues, black wool socks with dark blue clocks on them. I was neat, clean, shaved, and sober, and I didn't acre who knew it. I was everything the well-dressed private detective ought to be. I was calling on four million dollars.

This passage shows a self-awareness and sense of irony toward the image Marlowe knows he projects. He thinks about more than the crime, and that is what makes him fascinating.

However, Chandler has given Marlowe a serious flaw. In an essay entitled **"The Simple Act of Murder,"** Chandler said, "In everything that can be called art there is that quality of redemption..... But down those mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid...The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything....he must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world." In short, Marlowe is so goodthat he is trapped in it. The moral redemption is innate in his character, and not a developing part of the novel, and so the morality of the novel is stunted, not allowed to fully expand. The heroes are good and the villains are bad, and all you have to do to tell which is which is to look for the characteristcs Chandler endows them with. The ones that are sexually promiscuous or perverse are the villains. This oversimplification hurts the book, although Chandler does tone it down from his essay. Marlowe will at least admit to being afraid, and the way he pokes fun at himself makes his knight-in-shining-armor role less obvious, as when he says, "I wasn't wearing a gun. I doubted if it would do any good. The big man would probably take it away from me and eat it," (from **Farewell, My Lovely**).

Marlowe is ultimately interesting anyway, despite his too-pureness that makes it hard for the reader to actually like him, because although he is a knight-errant, the knights don't win the ladies in Southern California. Chandler says of Marlowe: "He is a failure and he knows it. He is a failure because he hasn't any money." He may be a moral success, but that costs him,

just as it cost Spade.

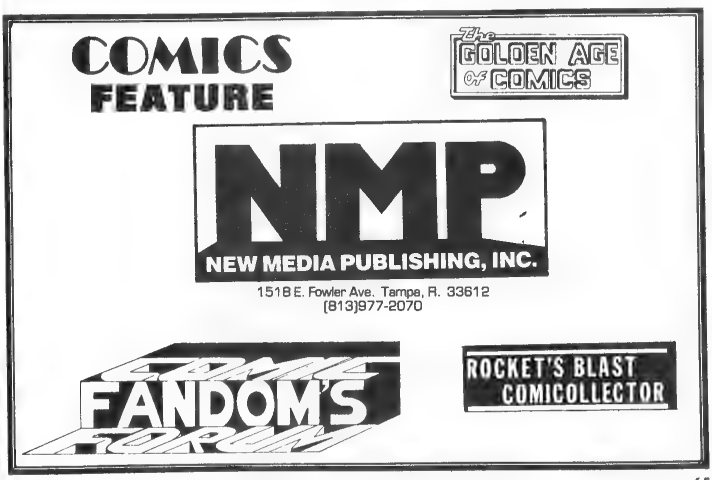
California, the setting for most of these stories, becomes the subject of the stories of Ross Macdonald. The lead character is Lew Archer, a middle-aged, divorced private eye, but California is more important than Archer, in its beautiful menace.

The physical beauty of California makes it seem like heaven, as described in the opening of **THE INSTANT ENEMY:** "There was a light early morning traffic on Sepulveda. As I drove over the low pass, the sun came glaring behind the blue crags on the far side of the valley. For a minute or two, before regular day set in, everything looked fresh and new and awesome as creation." It looks like the lost promised land, but the beauty holds menace. "Fruit flung down from their branches like green hand grenades," notes Archer in **THE UNDERGROUND MAN,** accurately noting that the lush beauty is not what it seems.

Archer gets involved with people in California who mirror the land. On the surface, all is smooth and nice. But beneath lurks the same vice and corruption that Spade and Marlowe encounter. But in this inferno, the villains ultimately become responsible for their own downfall, and the innocents realize that there are demons in the seeming paradise and try to escape. Archer is aware of this process as well. In **THE GOODBYE LOOK**, one of the characters tells him "You have a secret passion for justice. Why don't you admit it?" He replies, "I have a secret passion for mercy...but justice is what keeps happening to people."

Unlike the other private eyes, who are active agents for morality, Archer is more of a passive storyteller. Macdonald, in an interview , said, "Archer really isn't the hero of these books, in the old-fashioned sense. He's more of a narrator and observer than hero, although he's on the scene the whole time. But what happens, happens essentially to a lot of other people, twenty or more people in every book. It's their story that he tells, not his own." Archer's story is about society, and its own morality, not about the morality of an outsider.

With the coming of Lew archer, the hard-boiled type was set, the ground had been roughly covered, and with few exceptions, private detective fiction since has been filling in the spaces between the interpretations of Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald. There have been some new and interesting things done with the private-eye character since, but they are more like new developments on an established genre, whereas the previous writers were establishing the genre, and giving it an identity. The private eye may go on to new things, but thanks to these men, he was born.



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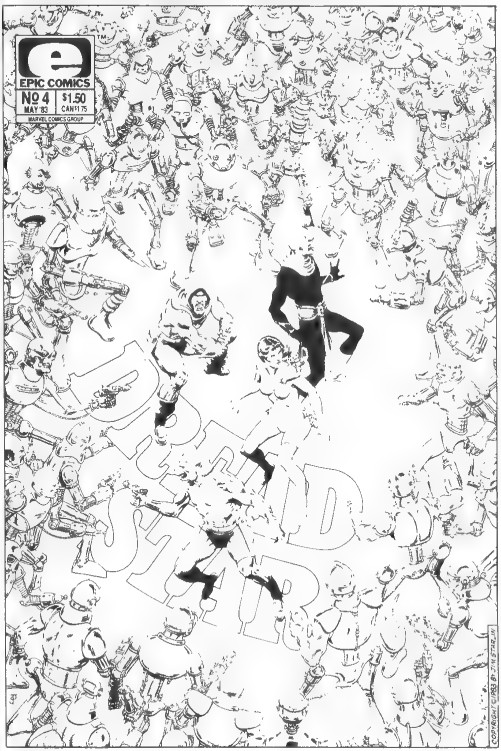

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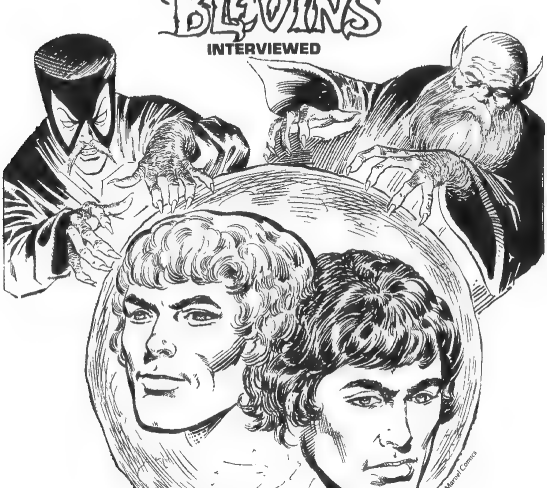
LOOKING AT A NEW TALENT AT MARVEL

BRET BLEVINS
INTERVIEWED



Bret Blevins is one of the newest artists to make a splash at Marvel Comics. Beginning with a Marvel Super Special as his first published work and following it with both a Baxter-format book and an additional Super Special as well as a Graphic Novel, is not the normal course that an artist follows. Obviously this man has impressed someone at Marvel with the quality of his work.

His art appeared in several issues of RBCC *and* Fantastic Exploits *immediately prior to his assignments at Marvel Comics. As the publisher of hese titles his talent caught my eye some time ago and when he appeared at Marvel it was no surprise. Currently he is working on an adaptation of a John Carter story, which has been licensed by the Burroughs Estate, for publication as a serial in* RBCC. *He is a man of great energy and high talent although not yet fully developed.*

Perhaps true to form, one of his first actions upon being given the Crystar *series was to redesign the characters in a way that he felt would work in a way that was more real to him. Following the interview is a portfolio of his new designs accompanied by the original conceptions. Make your own decision as to which works better.*

CF: When did you first begin to see yourself as a potential artist?

Blevins: I drew – for as long as I can remember, but I really got interested in '71, when I was 10. I'd always read comics and at that time the comics were getting very interesting...with Barry Smith, Wrightson, Kaluta and Jeff Jones, Neal Adams – all this very stylized artwork, very illustrative. For some reason, I was exposed to Kirby and Ditko when I was four or five years old so I always assumed that was what comic art was. Then when I saw all this illustrative work appearing, it turned my head. I thought, "Wow." For some reason I got very excited about it. I'd always been pretty good at drawing and I felt, "Well, this is for me," so I started working at it. It took me about 11 years – I decided I wanted to be a comic artist in '71 and I got work in '82, so 11 years.

CF: Did you take any formal training?

Blevins: Well, no – I had a very good art teacher in high school. His name was Willard Kowallis.

CF: Was he teaching you comic art or still life or...

Blevins: No, no, no – nothing like comic art. What was so effective about it was that he really didn't actually teach us that much technically, it was more an exposure to all the various types of art. He had Picasso, surrealism, impressionism – examples of all the different labels that have been attached to art over the centuries. He would get very enthusiastic talking to us about all these things. I began to see – where before Picasso was always soley a puzzle to me – I began to see all the creative energy going into all these things and he sort of expanded my mind. He gave me an incredible appetite to learn. That's basically what he did for me, he taught me how to learn. From there I gobbled up everything I came in contact with.

"People like Kirby, Ditko, Caniff-they're pure comic-story-telling artists and there is a big difference between that and the illustrative work."

CF: Is this how you developed your style? You went and looked at their [Smith, Wrightson, Kaluta, Jones and Adams] work and from that you derived your own?

Blevins: Yes, at that time I was very heavily influenced by them. I was also very heavily influenced by artists like Dega, Rubin, Michelangelo – Renaissance artists. Later I got into the impressionists. I just fell in love with visual picture making and so I was able to get interested in almost any type of artwork. That's what I'm so grateful to Mr. Kowallis for. He gave me this appetite. I got so interested in making pictures that I just devoured everything. There were so many ideas to go after that it seemed to make it easier to learn; it was fun and interesting to try and do anything – any type of artwork.

CF: What type of pictures did you begin to draw?

Blevins: I went through all kinds of phases. There were periods when I'd given up comics – I was going to be a fine artist. I went through several phases like that. But I always came back to them because they were so powerful. I never really appreciated comic art until I actually started doing it. In the last six months I've really learned how much skill and thought and creativity can go into doing comic art, story-telling art. It gets more fascinating as time goes by. I think that all of the years that I kept wanting to be in comics was just being fueled off that enthusiasm that I had as a child. I was really knocked out by Kirby and Ditko when I was four or five years old. I learned to read when I was around five through comics. I learned to read comics first. Spiderman was such a real person to me at that time that I just wanted to do something about that all these years. Comic books are so graphic and violent. There's all this incredible energy just flying. You walk into a "7-Eleven" and look at the comic stand and there's all this outrageous action and violence just pouring off the tree – it was so strong that it just bowled me over. I couldn't get rid of that.

CF: Did you make contact with any artists you could talk to?

Blevins: That's always been one of my biggest problems. I met Wrightson at several conventions and I met Kaluta. And that's about it of those people I mentioned, until later, after I'd actually started working. We went to NY for a week and I saw quite a few people I admired there. At the time I was learning I lived in places where there weren't even any other collectors. That's one of the reasons that I periodically fell out of comics. I got tired of trying to feed my own enthusiasm.

CF: You were in contact with people like Jim Van Hise.

Blevins: That didn't happen until '78. From '78 on I was pretty much decided. I wanted to do comics.

CF: Where did your first material see print?

Blevins: Actually when I was 13, when I first moved to Nevada, I illustrated a religious puzzle book for one of my teachers in Junior High School. I did fifty drawings to back up crossword puzzles. That was the first thing I ever published. I got paid $100 for it -- this was in '74 -- and to me that was an incredible amount f money. I went out and blew the whole wad on Beatle albums. It was one of the great moments of my life.

CF: You're influenced by the illustrative artists. A lot of comic enthusiasts don't feel that that is truly comic art. They feel that these people are illustrators and that they're doing almost still lifes -- there's no motion as say, in the way that there would be in something Milton Caniff would have done or Will Eisner would do or more recently Steve Ditko or Jack Kirby. There isn't the great finesse of the completed painting which the illustrators come closer to and yet there's a certain motion on the page that Kaluta and Chaykin seem to lack.

Blevins: Yes, that's true. People like Kirby, Ditko, Caniff -- they're pure comic story-telling artists and there is a big difference between that and the illustrative work. I've been trying to work that out since I started working for Marvel. That's what they're telling me. "Look at Kirby and see the essence of the story-telling art." What happens is that I'm incredibly attracted to draftmanship too. I think that Frazetta is one of the greatest draftsmen who ever worked in comics. What happens is, when I'm studying, I find that there's a certain effectiveness in Frazetta's work that I don't find in Kirby's. One of the judgements I made about how effective a comic artist was was that, when I was studying the art, I began to read the story -- I would just be looking at the pictures, but I would be drawn into the story. That always happened to me when I was studying Frazetta, even though he illustrated some of the most banal stories ever done in comics. His drawing was so accurate -- the expressions on the faces -- and it created such a powerful mood that it drew you into the story in a different way than say Kirby and Ditko did, which was purely by manipulating all the factors of the story.

CF: Wasn't there still the problem of having very strong draftsmen working in comics as opposed to someone who was telling a comic story with pictures and the words worked as a unit? For example, when Spiderman is swinging on a Ditko page, he actually swings from panel to panel and you can see the movement. You're dealing with still frames when you're dealing with Frazetta.

Blevins: My ideal would be to combine those two. That's basically what I'm trying to do. To be able to get into all the intricacies of composition and lighting and action and...

CF: Then you're going to have to start looking at Noel Sickles and Alex Toth.

Blevins: What a coincidence. The walls of my studio are papered in Noel Sickles and Alex Toth. I had extra copies of their work and I cut them up and they cover the walls. And Joe Kubert. To me they come very close. What appeals to me so much about Frazetta is that everything he does is so sensual. Everything has this kind of languid movement -- or violent movement, depending. He even draws rocks that have motion. To me, that's just about as far as you can go. I've made lots of studies of his work where I take a painting or one of his drawings and I put vellum over it and duplicate it down to the last brush stroke. I really see what he's doing then. You can study it for years and you'll never see tons of things until you actually go over every line yourself. Then you say, "Wow, I see what he was thinking here," and you become aware of how he distorts. The thing that impresses me so much about Frazetta now (I'm waxing on Frazetta because I happen to be very into him at the moment) is that he knows the anatomy so well -- I mean he knows it from the marrow of the bones out -- so that he can distort it anyway wants he wants -- naturally. It flows out of his feeling about what he's doing. Because he knows it so well, he can bend bones, he can break bones, he can dis-

tort muscles and make them look accurate. He's doing it so instinctively because he has that kind of knowledge. That's the kind of knowledge I'm trying to learn now. I want to learn anatomy, I want to take all the technical aspects of drawing as far as I can go and hopefully not lose sight of what I want to do with it. That happens occasionally. You get artists who are technically brilliant, but they really don't do much with it.

CF: Do you tend to find yourself more of a penciller or more of an inker? Do you lay down great detail at the pencil stage or do you tend to rough the pencils and then go back and work heaviest in the inking stage?

Blevins: Well, that depends entirely on the project. At the point I'm at now, I really can't answer that question truthfully because I'm just finding that out. Everything that I've done so far has been so fast that I haven't had time to pay much attention to what I was doing. I hope to change that situation sometime in the next few months. So far all my projects have been delayed before I ever got hold of them, so it was rush, rush, rush. I'm learning things at a very fast pace as I fly along. I'll find out about that question in the next few months and then we can do this interview again! [Laughter]

CR: One thing I noticed about your work to date is that everything seems to be fantasy.

Blevins: That annoys me a bit too. I somehow seem to have been stamped as a fantasy artist, but I enjoy doing real things too. Actually I've done a lot of work that isn't fantasy, but it just hasn't been published. It seems that whenever I do commercial work it always seems to fall in that category. I don't know why.

CF: I think you're very quickly getting type-cast.

Blevins: Yes, I know. Nobody thinks of me to do super-heroes like, say, Spiderman, but hopefully I can get into that.

"I somehow seem to have been stamped as a fantasy artist..."

"...I've done a lot of work that isn't fantasy, but it just hasn't been published."

CF: Or westerns or war stories or anything else. Do you have an interest in all of the genres or particular areas?

Blevins: Not particularly war stories, but I'm pretty open about everything else. For some reason I never could get into military stories.

CF: The other thing I've seen of yours was a sort of fairy tale horror story in **Twisted Tales**.

Blevins: Oh yes. Oh boy, I don't really care too much for that story because the situation on that got a little out of hand. The deadline was so tight that I did it so fast that I really can't even – I really couldn't even remember some of the things I did on it until I saw it printed, so I wasn't too happy with that. But I'm doing one more story for Pacific now that I'm really putting a lot of time into. I'm trying to erase that one, the first one.

CF: Where will that second story appear?

Blevins: Twisted Tales #3.

CF: When I spoke to you earlier today you mentioned something about commisions coming in "hand over fist." I believe that was the the phrase you used.

Blevins: For all this time I've wanted to work in comics. Then all of the sudden everybody was asking me to do things and I just sort of lost control and took on too many assignments. I'm going to be busy every day for the next eight months! It's going to take me quite a while to work my way through these jobs.

"Nobody thinks of me to do super-heroes... but hopefully I can get into that."

CF: What are you scheduled to do?

Blevins: I'm doing the bi-monthly Crystar book from now on, which I'm pencilling and inking. I'm pencilling and inking the Krull movie adaption which I will start working on immediately. I'm doing an Epic comic with David Micheline and I'm doing a Hulk graphic novel with Jim Shooter.

CF: What is the story you're doing with Micheline for Epic Comics like?

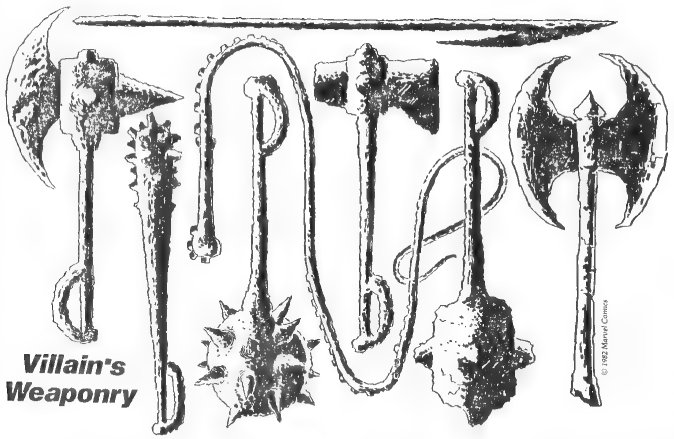
Blevins: Well, I can't talk about that yet because we haven't settled the deal. That's secret stuff.

CF: Well, we'll cover that in that next interview. [Laughter] You're doing a Hulk graphic novel with Jim. Is that going to be out this year?

Blevins: I think it will be out near the end of the year. The whole thing is due on September first.

CF: Now that will take you outside the fantasy realm to a certain degree.

Blevins: Well, I think so. It looks like the initial plot – I just talked to Jim [Shooter] briefly about it today – and it seems like it's going to take place on earth in normal



surroundings. That will give me a chance to do stuff like cars and...

CF: It will give you a chance to do things that are recognizable. A lot of the things you do are things that people look at and say, "Gee, that's really nice. I don't know if he can draw anything, but it's really nice."

Blevins: That was the problem I had in the first issue of **Crystar**. I think very organically and the entire world is made out of rock and crystal. I really had a hard time getting into it. But on the second issue, we were able to reinterpret all the designs. In the first one they're more like actual chisled crystal, cut stone. On the second one they're more like cut glass. That made it much easier for me to deal with. On the first one I had a hard time conceiving of them being able to move because of those chisled forms. It was like if they lifted thier arm it would break.

CF: How do the joints work in that type of...

Blevins: Yeah, I couldn't get it, so it was very hard for me to draw. Thankfully on the second one we were able to streamline it.

CF: Are you doing anything outside of Marvel and Pacific?

Blevins: No, that's about it. I think that's all quite enough.

CF: How did you get involved with the Crystar project?

Blevins: I'll tell you what I know. What happened was, I was doing the Dark Crystal and I was maybe two thirds of the way through and I began to wonder what I was going to do next. So I called Louise Jones, who was editing the book, and I said, "Is there anything else around that I can do?" She said, "Yes, I've had you in mind for this book called **Crystar**." She was editing it at that time. I asked, "Do you have anything on it you can send me?" She said, "Sure." So she sent me xeroxes of the characters and so forth. And from that point onward I was doing it. And then later, they shifted the editorial load around and Ralph Macchio took over. He was one of the people who was originally in on the conception of the idea anyway. I don't know why I was chosen. That's all I know about it.

CF: I guess they figured you had the experience with crystals.

Blevins: Yeah, I seem to be the crystal guy here.

CF: At the point you stepped in the characters and the world had already been designed?

Blevins: They were intending to do some kind of fantasy that was different from the rest of the Marvel Universe. That was the idea behind it. They came up with this concept and then, apparently, from what I understand, Remco **then** picked it up to make toys from it. The concept was created first, not the other way around.

CF: Who did the visuals?

Blevins: The original character sheets were done by John Romita, Jr. Those character designs are the ones that appear in the first issue. In the second issue the characters are different. They're more like glass. They're very similar, but everything is a little more flighty, organic and delicate. The castle has changed from a sort of medieval looking structure to this sort of fairyland castle. It's basically the same thing. I just made

it a little easier for me to deal with. I don't tend to do very many straight lines in my work. I like a lot of organic, flowing shapes.

CF: More like real life.

Blevins: I'm not too good with a ruler. I guess that's too complicated for me.

CF: I guess that would be the opposite of say, Marshall Rogers.

Blevins: Yes, he's very technical. Well, apparently he...

CF: He was an architectural draftsman I believe.

Blevins: That's where he got his training.

CF: I imagine that gives you a slightly different approach than studying Cheykin and Kaluta and...

Blevins: Well, you can tell by his work that he's very architectural.

CF: The **Crystar** book itself, what is the plan for that?

Blevins: In the third issue they're making a nod toward attaching it to the rest of the Marvel Universe for the benefit of the regular Marvel reader. In the third issue they happen through Dr. Strange's dimension and land in his mansion. Really that's all I know about the plot. After that it's going to take place almost entirely on Crystalium. Crystalium, the entire universe, is going to be seperate from the rest of the Marvel Universe, so it's pretty much carte blanche on anything we want to do. That's what's so exciting about it.

CF: But it does take place as a part of the regular Marvel Universe?

Blevins: Just that third issue. It's like a tie-in for all the fans of Dr. Strange to pick up this book.

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CF: The third issue just establishes that it takes place in the same continuum. After that it doesn't interfere with the other Marvel characters?

Blevins: Yes, it's just to, in some way, attach it to the rest of the Marvel books, and then we'll go on from there.

CF: So in the third issue, do they run into Dr. Strange?

Blevins: Yes. He'll even be on the cover!

CF: So we'll get to see you draw Dr. Stange.

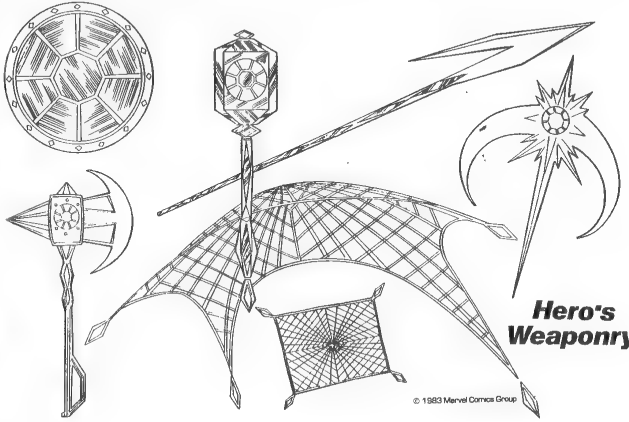
Blevins: Yeah, I'm really looking forward to that. You know Ditko is one of my idols.

CF: Have you completed the pencils on the second issue?

Blevins: I'm completing them now. I'll probably be finished in a couple of days. Then I'll start inking it.

CF: How have you found working with Jim Shooter?

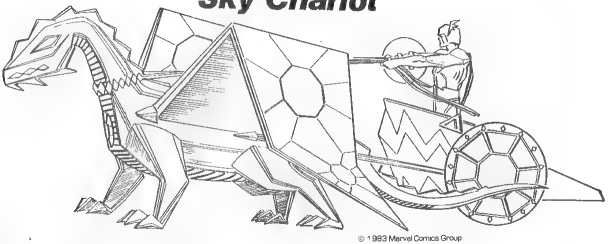
Blevins: I'd like to go on record as saying that all of my dealings with Jim Shooter have been just wonderful. I've never understood what the big – of course I don't know anything about other situations, but to me he's been kind.



Hero's Weaponry

© 1983 Marvel Comics Group

Sky Chariot



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CF: Has he dictated how you should do things?

Blevins: No, he suggests what he thinks would work best, but in now way forces anything.

CF: What happens if you don't take a suggestion?

Blevins: Nothing. Most of the suggestions he makes make very good sense. His main concern in that the story-telling is clear and most of the suggestions he makes are concerning that. Clear and dynamic – that's what a comic story from Marvel requires.

CF: From what I know of Jim, he seems to have a very strong story sense.

Blevins: Yes.

CF: Have you had a problem with anyone there at Marvel trying to impose a "House Style" that you have to try to look like?

Blevins: No, no problems at all. In fact the only problem I've had so far is that I've had to get used to working for a deadline. Everybody in the industry has that. That's the only real problem I've had – lack of sleep.

CF: When I was talking to Jim about a "House Style" he said that any company that has Herb Trimpe, Bill Sienkiewicz, John Buscema and Jim Starlin can't have a house style. There's just so much diversity.

Blevins: The simplest way I can put it is that Jim's concern is that a story be entertaining, dynamic, and clear. That's a pretty generic requirement for anything. There's no problem there. When we were in New York we went out to dinner with him.

CF: He's made you feel at home at Marvel?

Blevins: Yes. When we were up there, we moved out of our hotel after the first night and stayed with Louise Jones and Walt Simonson. That's about as at home as you can get.

CF: How did you end up working for Marvel?

Blevins: What happened was I began to submit things to Al Milgrom in '78 when he was at DC. He would write back and say, "You work on this, this, and this." It was like a give and take learning experience over there. I worked with him for five years, then I followed him when he went to Marvel. I also submitted stuff to DC, even after he went to Marvel. For some reason I always wanted to work for DC because they had Batman. I knew that they worked full script as opposed to Marvel's synopsis. And I'd seen some of Marvel's synopsis at conventions. I thought, "Oh God, if they give me one of those I'd be completely lost. There's nothing I could do. I'd better stick with full script."

CF: Now do you find it easier to work with full scripts or with the synopsis as you do at Marvel now?

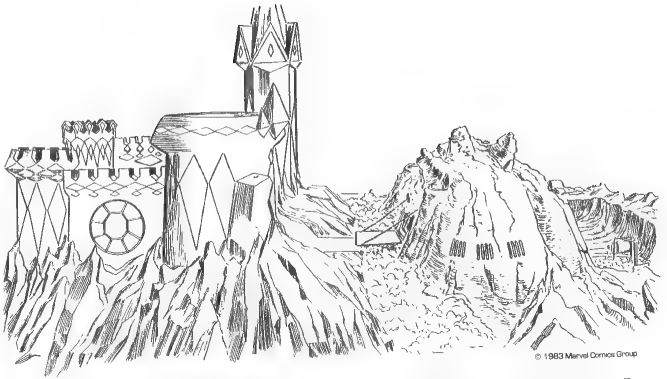
Blevins: It's really just a different approach. With a script you know what the characters are saying already. You are able to place the balloons in the composition. There's good points on both sides. Sometimes when you're working with a plot – this hasn't happened to me yet, but it could happen – the writer writes much more than you anticipated. Then the words over-power the pictures. Or sometimes you leave a lot of room for words and there's nothing to say. You don't really know.

CF: Jim Shooter told me that one of the problems that you can run into is that the writer and the artist working on a plot synopsis may not be visualizing the same thing. Do you find that happening?

Blevins: Just small incidents of things like that happening, where sometimes the writer indicates things and there's a discrepancy visually. Things that are almost impossible to draw. For example, saying, "Show close-ups of several characters talking while also showing a major amount of background." It makes it very difficult to do that in a very logical way.

CF: I know that Chris Claremont and John Byrne ran into a great deal of problems when they were working together. According to Byrne, Claremont would tell him what he wanted to see in a panel and then Claremont would write the script to read something entirely different. Of course, Claremont claims that Byrne just didn't put what he wanted there. Working with Mary Jo, you haven't encountered any such problems?

Blevins: Oh no, not yet. I don't think we'll have any problem. I've actually had more personal contact with Mary than just about anybody else because I went to a convention with her a few weeks ago and we've talked over the phone. I'm beginning to get an idea of how she works and I know she's doing the same with me. There doesn't look like there's going to be any problem at all.



Crystal Palace

CF: So an artist and a writer who are going to do a series like that together really have to know each other fairly well. Is that right?

Blevins: It would certainly help. I'm hoping to move to Connecticut next month so then I'll be right there and that should make it even easier.

I'm learining now as I'm working that there are so many levels of thought that you don't even conceive of until you've actually been working. There's the things that occur just from working that many hours a day and doing that much work and that many pages. You gain skills while doing them that you aren't even aware are happening. I've started inking too and inking is a whole other ball game where you start all over again. I think that's really why I'm so fascinated with comic art now, because there's so much more to it than I realized.

CF: You say that by doing that amount of work you grow in certain ways. What specifically do you mean?

Blevins: My story-telling has improved vastly just from doing it. You can't even really imagine all that goes into it just from looking at the comics, because you're only picking up the pieces that are very appealing to you. Story-telling effects that are naturally appealing to you as a fan are what you initially go into the business with. Then, when you are faced with certain story-telling problems – for instance, if you like Ditko then you love the way he handles Spiderman or Doctor Strange – Spiderman in action and Dr. Strange when he's involved in casting spells – but you never actually paid much attention to when they're standing in a room talking to other people. When you're drawing the story you have to deal with that too and try to make it interesting.

CF: Are you talking about body language and...

Magma Mountain

Blevins: Yes, and see, all these other levels come into it. You learn a lot about composition and how to make things more effective without going too far. You learn how to put action or motion into a page where people are sitting still at a desk and nothing is happening, but you have to move them around. There are things you've never thought of before. It's fairly easy to draw a dynamic fight scene, but it's kind of difficult to draw a dynamic sleeping scene. It just gets more fascinating as different situations and scripts come in. It gets more and more fascinating for me to try and deal with them in ways I never even thought of before.

CF: Alex Toth and the other artists we were discussing use very limited lines and use the least number of strokes possible.

Blevins: That's very, very important. In fact, I was having a discussion today with Ralph Macchio and Jim Shooter about that very thing. Inking is where I really became aware of that. I inked several things for the **Dark Crystal**. I inked the two covers for the two regular comics, they're reprints of the original 48 page book and I did a splash page for it. I've seen the first cover and it went all dark and muddy because I overinked it drastically. It looked fine in black and white, but when it's reproduced all these strange things happen and I'm just learning that by seeing it. I've been doing ink drawing for ten years now, and all of the sudden it struck me out of the blue that at least 75% of all these drawings [Frazetta's] are white paper; there's just not that much ink on the paper. I also had fallen in love with lines. I had spent a long time learning how to control the brush so now I could make all these fine brush strokes. I was making all these lines and not paying much attention to the whole picture.

CF: That is a very difficult area to master. Toth and Caniff and Sickles...

Blevins: I think I'm the only person I know who likes Jessie Marshe's artwork.

CF: You and Alex Toth.

Blevins: That's right, that's right. I remember seeing an article...

CF: Frank Robbins has done some very beautiful stuff, particularly his Johnny Hazards.

Blevins: Yes, he did some very nice stuff in the early '70s.

CF: I think the issues of the **Shadow** that he did worked better for that character than the ones that Mike Kaluta did.

Blevins: I didn't know that he did any **Shadows**. How could I have missed those. I was thinking of Batman...

CF: His **Shadows** for DC worked even better because – there are certain preconceptions about what Batman looks like because he has been done by Carmine Infantimo – with the **Shadow** there wasn't so much of a preconception about what it should look like. He did a few interesting Marvel things too, like the issues of the **Human Fly** that he did.

Blevins: I missed that too.

CF: He did some and Lee Elias did some. He also did that first double-sized **Man From Atlantis** which was very nice.

Blevins: Wow, I'll have to start going through the comic shops and taking a look.

CF: I think he did some very strong work. Now, when they put him on **Captain America**, I don't think he looked right. Again there's a preconception of a very muscular Captain America.

Blevins: This is amazing. I haven't seen any of this. I didn't know he did **Captain America** either.

CF: I guess it all goes back to Sickles though, doesn't it?

Blevins: Oh yeah, he's incredible. In fact, I didn't mention this before but he's the other person on my wall. I have the entire **Scorchy Smith** book on my wall. I want all that pumping into my brain.

"Most of the suggestions [Jim Shooter] makes make sense. His main concern is that the story-telling is clear and most of the suggestions he makes are concerning that."

CF: That should certainly help you're inking. Are you going to get into coloring at Marvel at all?

Blevins: Well, actually I colored a few pages on the **Dark Crystal** magazine. I think it was mainly because I happened to be there and they were in a rush. I'd like to try that eventually, but for now I'm concentrating on continuing to work on the story-telling and on my inking until I really get that down pat. I also paint. I'll be painting a cover for **Krull**, I want to get into that too. I haven't painted in so long, I'm beginning to get rusty.

CF: Have you looked at the script for **Krull** yet?

Blevins: I kind of briefly looked over it. I was going to start on it and then they moved the movie back so they've delayed it. I've been so busy with **Crystar** that I haven't had a chance to...

CF: What is **Krull** going to be about?

Blevins: The most information I have on it is what I've read in the film magazines. It's a medieval fantasy on the planet Krull. The object of the story is that they're trying to make peace between these two warring kingdoms by marrying the prince and princess. The devil of this planet interferes because he wants to control the kingdom. The rest of the story is the adventures they go through trying to unite and destroy the beast. Other than the fact that it has very interesting visuals, I don't know much about it yet.

CF: They've put you back on fantasy again, haven't they?

Blevins: I wonder why.

CF: Any more crystals lurking about?

CF: In fact, I think there are. The Crystal Spider...that's right. Bret "Crystal" Blevins.

CF: Are there any plans to try to have **Crystar** animated?

Blevins: They're making animated television commercials.

CF: Do you ever plan to try your hand at animation art?

Blevins: I love animation. There was a period when I was really torn between going into comics or going off to California and trying to get work with Disney. I think what finally decided it was that it takes so long to really get into a position where you have any great degree of control in animation. There's a minimum of five years of training. I couldn't deal with five years of backgrounding and in-betweening. When you get with Marvel you do the whole universe.

CF: I have the impression that there's a great deal less creative freedom in animation.

Blevins: Usually with an animated film – I don't know much about saturday morning cartoon, but for feature films – there's just an incredible amount of money involved as compared to a single comic book.

CF: Do you spend much time worrying about creators' rights and benefits and health plans and things of this sort?

Blevins: So far I'm more than happy with the money and we're on the Marvel freelancers' insurance. My attitude now is that I have several characters of my own that I've had for years, but right now I just want to work on becoming a professional. I'm still pretty much an amateur feeling his way in. I want to learn the craft before I worry about selling my own ideas. I'm just going to spend the next year learning how to do comics well.

CF: Joe Staton told me that once an artist has established himself it's foolish to work on someone else's books. The benefits and inducements are better for working on your own properties.

Blevins: Actually, I've had some discussions with people about this. Now, I'm just a very limited story-teller. I've really only been telling stories on a regular basis for six months. I really don't know that much about it. If I started doing my own thing at this time, I probably wouldn't develop as much, I don't think. Working at such a pace, when you have so much work and so many different situations that you're drawing in, it's bound to open my head up and make me a better comic book artist. Then when I feel I'm skilled enough to handle my ideas as best as they can be done...

CF: Get your sea legs before you try to sail the ship so to speak.

Blevins: That's basically it. That's the way I feel about it. I don't think of myself as being that good yet. I feel I've got a lot of potential, but I basically need work on my inking and some aspects of my story-telling. It also involves certain degrees of particular types of concentration that I've never had experience in. As I mentioned before, you tend to accent the qualities about telling a story of draftmanship that appeal to you. That's why you become influenced by the people that you do. That's the type of artwork that you respond to. You tend to accent what you like in other people's work. When you're actually doing the story, you get faced with all these other different situations. I want to become just as proficient with all these other different situations. I want to become just as proficient with all the levels that I come in contact with, to add to the ones that I'm already familiar with.

CF: I think it comes to the point where you have to not only understand that someone you admire made these decisions, but you have to understand why they made them.

Blevins: Yes, that's it. You just hit the nail on the head, because if you are fascinated with Kubert story-telling, you can take a Kubert comic and absorb it for weeks and bury your mind in it and then do a pretty good fake Kubert comic. You can imitate. But it fades away quickly because what you're doing is remembering all his mannerisms, all the things that you observed visually, but you didn't understand the thinking behind it. Once that initial memory gets foggy, you lose it, and that's happened to me many times. I would really bone down and study someone as hard as I could, and I would think, "I've got it!" and it would work for a couple of days. Then it would begin to slip, since I really didn't understand the thinking behind it. The paradox of all this is that once you realize this and you study what they're thinking, then it comes out in your own style which is what you wanted all along anyway.

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CF: I think the thing that appeals to me about your artwork is that it looks more like Bret Blevins artwork than anyone else's.

Blevins: Wow, that's really flattering. I'm glad to hear that. I really appreciate that. That's probably the most gratifying thing an artist can hear.

CF: I find that too many artists tend to look too much like other people's artwork.

Blevins: There's not very many people actually learning to draw from life. If you don't learn exclusively from that, you should at least start from that; that should be a big part of your influence.

CF: As you said before, a lot of what you learned to draw from was not comic art.

Blevins: I like to think that what you said about my art not resembling other people's is true. It's probably just because I look at so many different types of things.

A PORTFOLIO OF RE-DESIGNED CHARACTERS FROM CRYSTAR

NEW DESIGN

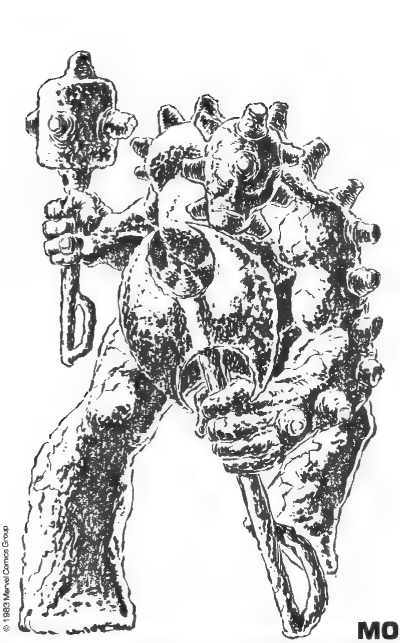
© 1983 Marvel Comics Group

By Bret Blevins

CRYSTAR

© 1983 Mark Of Zorro Group

NEW DESIGN



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MOLTAR

NEW DESIGN

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OGEODE

NEW DESIGN

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LAVOUR

NEW DESIGN

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FELDSPAR

Green Lantern/Green Arrow, under the creative hand of Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams was a unique book. We will probably never quite see its like again since Neal Adams has virtually left comics and Denny O'Neil seems firmly entrenched as an editor at Marvel Comics. And the times will never again be the same either. The late sixties and early seventies were a time of energy, a time of protest, a time when it seemed that every wrong must be righted—immediately. The book was an organized protest and a very relevent turning from the conventions of comic books. But just how well did it work as a comic book itself?

Here, in an issue almost entirely devoted to looking forward to the future of comic books, Margaret O'Connell and Joel Thingvall have taken the time to look back at this important series. And they have both come away from the experience with very different perceptions.

Why I Can't Tell You About Green Lantern/Green Arrow

by Joel Thingvall

MEANWHILE, IN A SECLUDED SPOT AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL...
IN BRIGHTEST DAY, IN BLACKEST NIGHT, NO EVIL SHALL ESCAPE MY SIGHT!
LET THOSE WHO WORSHIP EVIL'S MIGHT, BEWARE MY POWER— GREEN LANTERN'S LIGHT!
SEE, HE HAS A HANG-UP ABOUT ECOLOGY, ONLY INSTEAD OF MOANING, HE ACTS!
LISTEN TO THIS NEWS ITEM...
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My purpose it to tell you why I can't tell you about the Green Lantern and Green Arrow comic that burst upon the seventies with thought and power, public relations and artistic excellence, and which was, for me, the best thing to hit comicdom at that moment.

It is [forgive me] a graphic story about two men. A woman too, I guess. They are best called super heroes. Comic book heroes with character. Powerful people with emotion. At times dicontented. At times over-eloquent.

A drama, you say.

No.

A comedy. A warm comedy. A warm, tender, moving, wrackingly laugh-out-loud comedy.

Impossible, you say.

But then, if you're exceptionally quick, you realize how Messers, Schwertz, O'Neil, Adams and Giordano managed to do it.

They gave us two heroes who show us that hideous moral cancer that is rotting our very soul.

If you got that out of the books, my hat would be off to your wisdom, but you can still be wrong. Comic books are nothing but entertainment, appealing to the masses who crave that moment of action-filled excitment. They have to be that in order to be called a comic book. But Green Lantern and Green Arrow [with Black Canary and Speedy] also presented a "view" [quotes mine] of that hideous moral cancer.

That cancer spreads and spends perhaps three-fourths of the book staring into our faces. Sometimes it is a big blow-up situation, sometimes just little fits between individuals. In other words, the pants got wet and needed changing.

It was not so much the little pollution operas, or social injustice operas, or race operas or dope preaching, as it is the operas representing individual situations — between individuals — in which a conflict appears. The conflict is most apparent between the two main characters.

Allow me to take a moment and look at the first few issues, my own favorites although the later ones are considered the better by artistic authorities. A quote from "Ulysses Star is Still Alive."

The story begins over a claim of trees by double parties. Violence. The two fellows in green appear. Violence is temporary clenched. Situation is

explained to the reader. Explaining done.

Lantern: Then there's nothing we can do to help!

Arrow: The heck there isn't! We canstay...and fight! We're supposed to be good at fighting – remember?!

Lantern: I'm getting a bit tired of your lording it over me with your moral superiority routine. If you want to break the law – go ahead! But count me out!

Arrow: That I will do gladly!

Both walk off in different directions.

Lantern: (thought) That blasted hothead! He starts swinging before he bothers to think! Maybe I was wrong, though! Maybe I can help—!

The story ends, conflict solved. But not until Green Lantern and Green Arrow have it out with each other. Violence among friends. Neither gains, both lose.

There is no way Green Lantern and Green Arrow can be warm and funny, which is why, since the comic is warm and funny, its achievement is so great. Personally, I didn't believe that such a comic was possible. It expanded my view of the world.

Part of the reason the comic worked is the way it was done. Though not really appealing to the comic buying public (the 10-12 readership audience that fandom hates to admit exists), it did work for the short 13 issues it lasted and the few issues of The Flash it supported. It was all done through the verbalizing of Dennis O'Neil.

The comic reached new heights through the graphics and story-telling of Neal Adams (with a little help from Dan Adkins, Frank Giacoia and Dick Giordano, too). And Julie Schwartz was the guiding father figure behind it. You got characters, real characters in the farthest sense of the word "real," mouthing dialogue that explodes across the page with philosophy of meaning.

Such an example is: "On the streets of Memphis a good black man died, and in Los Angeles a good white man fell. Something is wrong! Something is killing us all! Some hideous moral cancer is rotting our very souls!"

The above is mildly humorous and can make the mind laugh, especially when placed in the comic context. Here you have a green clad archer (shades of Robin Hood) talking to a godhead face in the sky (blue-skinned and short to boot). Lunatic people. Fantasy. Melodrama. No, I'd have to say pure drama. Drama in a fantasy setting that strives for entertainment in a setting of anguish.

Two scenes now. The first from "Journey Into Desolation." There are more, but let's be content with these two.

Battle smoke. A small child running.

Child: Help, please. Somebody, help me.

A Guardian comes upon her.

Child: Mister, I can't find my daddy. An' the noise, an' the smoke. I'm afraid.

Guardian: Weep not child. I shall see that you are not harmed.

The child embraces the Guardian.

Child: Thank you...

Guardian: Perfectly all right. (thought) A strange feeling, an emotion, as this tiny earthling embraces me. Is this what it is to be human?

This little child really "throws" the Guardian. A Guardian – one of the almight watchers of man. A man of

HELP.. PLEASE, SOMEBODY... HELP ME!
MISTER...I CAN'T FIND MY DADDY--AN' THE NOISE... AN' THE SMOKE--I'M AFRAID!
WEEP NOT, CHILD! I SHALL SEE THAT YOU ARE NOT HARMED!
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The famous sequence from *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #76 when GL faces a problem all his super-powers can't overcome.

I BEEN READIN' ABOUT YOU... HOW YOU WORK FOR THE BLUE SKINS...AND HOW ON A PLANET SOMEPLACE YOU HELPED OUT THE ORANGE SKINS...
...AND YOU DONE CONSIDERABLE FOR THE PURPLE SKINS! ONLY THERE'S SKINS YOU NEVER BOTHERED WITH--!
...THE BLACK SKINS! I WANT TO KNOW... HOW COME?!
ANSWER ME THAT, MR. GREEN LANTERN!
I... CAN'T...
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING
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noble order. Bull! He is nothing but a chunk of rock, whose soul is melted by a spark of thanks from a little child. A spark of kindness. A moment of love. Emotion. This moment of reality is so, I'm sorry, real – it stuns!

Another scene. The popular one.

Green Lantern and Green Arrow bitching at each other.

Lantern: Easy! You've got no cause to yell at me! I have a job! I do it!

Arrow: Seems I've heard that line before, at the Nazi war trials!

Voiced: (off setting) I want to ask the ring-slinger a question, Mr. Green Arrow.

An old negro, ragged with age and dress enters the scene.

Negro: I been readin' about you, how you work for the blue skins, and how on a planet someplace you helped out the orange skins, and you've done considerable for the purple skins. Only there's a skins you never bothered with. (emotional close-up) The black skins! I want to know – how come? Answer me that, Mr. Green Lantern.

Green Lantern hangs his head in questioning shame.

Lantern: I can't.

A super-hero is emotionally defeated, reduced, if I may say so, to a hapless, incurable, spastic child, and there's the end of it. Isn't it marvelous what happens when a super-hero – a man depending on strength and instinct – finds out that his brain works?

A look back. Personal. The mid-sixties. That time in my youth when I was looking for heroes in the comics, in the movies, in sports. I was also thinking about the future. Wanting to draw. Wanting to write. Wanting to throw a ball. Wanting to act. Wanting to be great, a hero. Thinking.

Always I would sprawl on the couch, doing homework in front of the television, eating in front of the television,

wishing I could have a television in school, on my bike, in the backyard, plugged into the pillow at night. This one day I was watching baseball. Oakland against the Yankees. The greatest team in baseball against a struggling group of misfits from the West Coast. 1965.

Some new young guy drives in a run against the Yankees. Amazing. But back to reading. The game can't be that good. But I want to return to that game, secretly. I've never heard of this new guy before, but if he can dent the Yankees, he can't be all that bad. So, I throw aside the book and he parks one. He powders it. Splat! And the ball is bouncing in the bleachers. I watch him circle the bases, and he has made my day, brought a bit of entertainment into my life. The game ends.

Later that summer the A's are again on the tube. I'm spread out on the couch at game time. Nothing happens until this rookie rockets one again. From the heels and gone. The kid is a hitter, but so was Bud Harrelson until the pitchers learned he couldn't hit the curve. And then the Yankees come up to the plate and they belt one way out, a shot to the outfield. But this player, this stupid Oakland outfielder, is so dumb he doesn't know it will be out on the fly. He takes off the after the ball and he flies himself, but what's the point. The ball's gone; it's practically out of there now. Only this guy goes into overdrive. His hat flies off and he's chasing with all he's got, but the ball's in the air and he's on the ground. And then the fence moves into the picture, immobile and all, and if it wasn't for the fence, the kid might have a chance for the ball, but not with that fence there.

And suddenly you realize that he's so stop-the-fight stupid that he doesn't realize the fence is there slamming in on him. Now there are just three items in the picture. The ball. The fence. This kid, and he's a dead man, except that you suddenly realize that no fence it going to give this boy trouble. Because a gloved hand flies up, the ball drops in, and he spins off the fence, the throw to the infield completed before the ball seems to be caught.

Reggie Jackson, and I fell in love with his playing that afternoon and his personality and salary has not caused that love to waver since. I'm sure he did better in other games, and worse in still more, than that one, but everytime I picked up a paper he was rocketing one, or charging about the outfield to take the ball off his show tapes, or starting before the crack of the bat to where the ball was to eventually land.

Yes, he did miss, though. But watching him I realized that it was about time that he arrived on baseball's horizon, because after all those years of being bored by baseball, of sitting in the bleachers during pitcher battles, of dying in the heat while the manager brought in a slow reliever, I'd been waiting for a Reggie Jackson. He was what baseball is all about. His skills — the speed of the turn and the throw after the catch, the instinctive start to where the ball was going to land almost before it left the pitcher's hands — those are skills for baseball.

I watched Reggie because in my head there was a notion of the way things ought to happen, but never quite do. Not until Reggie came along with his drama and entertainment, doing his demonstration, could I finally sit there and say to myself, "Oh, sure. That's it. Jackson is peculiar to baseball."

Green Lantern and Green Arrow, in the mid-seventies, was peculiar to the comic book format. There is no way it'll be as good-ever in any other form. You can make a movie out of it and if the technical effects and acting match the writing, it would be good. You can make a novel out of the characters and go inside the people, and the situations would probably still hold. But not as well as in the comic book format, work as well in straight story form just as talking about Jackson's hat flying off isn't the same as seeing it go, because when you talk about the hat you miss seeing how everything works underneath.

I waited a long time for a comic book like Green Lantern and Green Arrow. It's the reason I read all those make believe adventures of Superman, the battle between Bat-Mite and the Dynamic Duo, watched all those saturday morning flicker follies, walked to the newstand twice a week slowly turning the coins between my fingers. I was waiting for a comic book to come along and do it's demonstration, so that I could sit back and say to myself, "Oh, sure. That's it. Green Lantern and Green Arrow is what it has all been for. It's the comic medium's special thing and no one can steal it away from them."

It is, in the true and non-phony sense of the word a "comic book" (quotes mine), and that's why I can't tell you about Green Lantern and Green Arrow, the older youth comic experience.

You had to be there to experience it. Sadly, it is not still around for us all.

The Greening of Comic-Book America:

The O'Neil/Adams **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** Series

by Margaret O'Connell

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I USED TO SPEAK THAT OATH WITH PRIDE... WITH CONVICTION! BUT NOW...I'M NOT CONVINCED OF ANYTHING!
THE WORLD ISN'T THE BLACK-AND-WHITE PLACE I THOUGHT IT TO BE--ONCE, I MIGHT HAVE FOUGHT FOR SOAMES! BUT GREEN ARROW HAS MADE ME THINK THAT MAYBE AUTHORITY ISN'T ALWAYS RIGHT--
AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS JUST!

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The Denny O'Neil/Neal Adams **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** series broke on the world of comics with dazzling force in April 1970. Hailed as an artistic and thematic breakthrough by fans for its innovative treatment of crucial social issues comics had previously all but ignored, the **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** series succeeded in attracting widespread attention from the non-fan media as well, earning the official stamp of approval of so prominent a mundane-world personage as New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay. The series swept the first annual Academy of Comic Book arts awards, garnering prizes for best continuing feature, best individual story, and best writer, penciler, and inker in a dramatic feature. Its critical success inspired other comics creators to hastily jump on the social consciousness bandwagon, producing a tide of intensified relevance that engulfed comics at both major companies and inspired particularly drastic, though temporary, changes in familiar old DC standards like **Wonder Woman, Superman,** and **Lois Lane**. Both fan enthusiasts and outside observers spoke of **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** as the ground-breaking effort that would at last enable comics to grow up and break out of the fan ghetto into the position of acceptability and respect they had so long lacked in the consciousness of America as a whole.

There was just one problem. Whether because of its at times overbearing didacticism or its controversial subject matter, which reportedly caused it to be totally banned from distribution in some parts of the country, or from a combination of these, the book's sales came nowhere near to matching its vast critical acclaim. Finally, after a mere 13 issues (GL #76-89), **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** was cancelled in May 1972. The issues-oriented, socially-conscious Green Lantern/Green Arrow team lingered on a little longer as a back-up feature produced by Adams and O'Neil for three issues of **Flash** (#217-219), but after that, even the **Flash** back-up spot was reserved for Green Lantern solo stories. Though these continued to be written by O'Neil, the once-fiery author's creative zeal was understandably cooled by these persistent disappointments, and the Green Lantern solo strip soon reverted to the pre-"relevance" status quo of alien invaders, bug-eyed monsters, and time-honored gimmicks like the hero turned villainous for a day by his own ring.

No other writer appeared to carry on the torch of unmistakeably overt, "problem of the month" - type social criticism once it was abandoned by O'Neil — indeed, the shift in editorial climate would probably have made any such attempt impossible. The "relevant" trend at DC, where it had always been more of a fad hastily latched onto and only half understood, dissipated rapidly after this

point, as the trendy changes in **Wonder Woman** and the other surviving books which had borne the brunt of the new movement were rolled back and the status quo was restored. At Marvel, writers like Steve Englehart continued to practice a more subtle form of social and political commentary through devices such as the Nomad, nihilist, and "Nixon" storylines which Englhart skillfully integrated into the adventures of the newly revitalized Captain America. However, even the less overtly obvious political strain brought out in stories like these faded from the scene within a few years. By the end of the decade, Steve Gerber's eternally-alienated **Howard the Duck** was virtually the only remaining book at either company that consistently combined social criticism with the more standard action elements of conventional four-color fare. Even **Howard**'s quirky questionings of the status quo frequently teetered on the brink of being relevant chiefly to Gerber's private life and preoccupations, rather than to the public issues confronting society at large — a tendency which supposedly brought the book near cancellation more than once, and was one of the main bones of contention leading to Gerber's eventual departure from Marvel. Bill Mantlo's heavyhanded attempt to re-introduce "relevance," in the old **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** sense of the word, into the duck's adventures when he took over as writer resulted in a string of preachy, propagandistic fiascos, the most notorious of which was undoubtedly the **Howard the Duck** Magazine's disastrous anti-nuclear Christmas story. Unsurprisingly, the magazine was cancelled a few issues later, for reasons which doubtless had as much to do with its disappointing sales and embarrassing lack of artistic coherence as with Gerber's ongoing lawsuit against Marvel disputing (successfully, so far) their legal ownership of the character.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** series as a whole is its tendency to reduce complex social problems to the very kind of black-and-white oversimplifications the author claims he intends to avoid. Essentially, what O'Neil does is invert the "Establishment" values implicitly upheld in all previous issues of **Green**

NO... PROBLEM WITH YOU IS, YOU'RE THE WANDERIN' KIND! A YEAR, MAYBE TWO, YOU'D LEAVE DESOLATION--
...AN' WITH YOUR TALENT, YOU'D GET NOTICED! MAYBE EVEN FAMOUS LIKE THAT OTHER SINGER...THAT DYLAN FELLA!
AN' THEN REPORTERS AN' WHATNOT WOULD COME SNOOPIN' 'ROUND...
AN' WE DON'T WANT OUTSIDERS IN THESE HERE PARTS!
CAUSE OUTSIDERS'D SEE HOW YOU TREAT FOLKS... LIKE SLAVES...
AIN'T THAT THE... HEE... EVERLOVIN' TRUTH?
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Lantern, whose unusual premise of a high-powered hero who continually takes orders from a committee of short blue-skinned father figures had given it a decidedly conservative orientation toward the increasingly controversial issue of authority. Attempting to eliminate the book's apparently built-in bias in favor of established authority and the status quo, O'Neil goes to the opposite extreme of implying that all established institutions are inherently and irredeemably corrupt, and anyone who expresses even provisional allegiance to them is either a blind fool or a brutal villain out to feather his own nest at others' expense. In other words, the black-and-white protrayal of Lantern Corps good guys vs. evil alien bad guys is gone, only to be replaced by the equally black-and-white portrayal of leftist good guys (the self-righteous Green Arrow and his politically naive, but eager to be re-educated, sidekick Green Lantern) vs. right-wing corporate/racist/etc. bad guys. Especially in the first few O'Neil/Adams issues, these new-style bad guys are generally portrayed either as stereotyped bigoted rednecks or blackhearted big business slime who fall all over themselves to demonstrate their reactionary attitudes as soon as they appear on-panel. Subtle touches like the redneck town boss' bodyguard of former Hitler henchmen in GL/GA #77's "Journey to Desolation" further reinforce the black-and-white labeling process, as does the reactionaries' invariable eagerness to resort to violence even when this is not only totally unnecessary to achieve their supposed goals, as in "Ulysses Star Is Still Alive" (#79), but is also virtually the only thing the heroes can possibly use as an excuse to put a stop to their nefarious, but technically legal, activities.

Although ostensibly one of the main themes of the series is the importance of learning to think for yourself and to question accepted authority, neither O'Neil's simplistically one-sided presentation of the causes of social problems, nor his obvious intention of politically enlightening readers whom he often seems to consider as terminally naive as his reqorked version of Green Lantern, are conducive to independent thought on the audience's part. Until perilously near the end of the doomed series' short run, O'Neil invariably fails to leave room for the possibility that Green Arrowm, the author's mouthpiece, could ever be wrong in his analysis of and approach to explosive sociopolitical situations, much less that the archer's ideological opponents might have an iota of reason on their side, or even be halfway decent human beings. Instead, for the

first nine issues, O'Neil consistently portrays Green Arrow as an infallible ideological guide who is always proven right in the end, despite Green Lantern's occasional ludicrously-phrased objections to his explosively confrontational approach. Although O'Neil does expose Green Arrow's unthinking contempt for "crybaby" junkies as a flaw in his righteous facade in the drug issues, Green Arrow's approach to environmental problems caused by Ferris Aircraft, in the final issue of the series, is shown to be inadequate only because it is not as extreme as that of Isaac, an even more fanatical leftist crusader whose use of dangerously destructive tactics is condoned, if not approved, by the story's melodramatic and unbelievable "crucifixion" ending.

O'Neil's tendency to people each story with one clearly-designated representative of moral and ideological purity, one or more well-meaning but helplessly confused would-be assistant good guys, and hordes of fearless villains, merely invites the reader to transfer his allegiance from one set of authority figures to another. Instead of reverencing the more traditional, overtly patriarchal form of authority embodied by the Guardians, the receptive GL/GA reader would logically follow the dictates of a new source of not-to-be-questioned truths — left-wing ideologues like Green Arrow and the even more radical Isaac. The idea that there can be legitimate disagreement on priorities and tactics even among the most politically enlightened people is paid unconvincing lip service at best. Although O'Neil claims to be presenting the world in groundbreakingly realistic shades of gray, he has simply shifted the role of exponents of absolute moral right from the political right to the political left.

This shifting of moral authority under the guise of questioning the very idea of external authority as an accepted source of received truth is especially obvious in "No Evil Shall Escape My Sight," the story that introduced "relevance," personified in the form of Green Arrow, into the **Green Lantern** series. In order to dramatize the drastic shift away from the book's traditional orientation, O'Neil reduces the pre-GA Green Lantern to a one-dimensional caricature of his conventionally conservative former self, having him spout all the most simple-minded right-wing buzzwords about "anarchists" and "respect for law and order" when faced with a crowd of angry ghetto residents. This kneejerk reactionary GL, barely recognizable as the same hero who mere months earlier had complained to the Guardians' faces about their overprotective meddling in his handling of an assignment [GL No. 72, also by O'Neil], unhesitatingly sides with a slumlord who has "Reactionary Oppressor" written all over him, thanks to artist Neal Adams' stereotyped rendition of a near-literal capitalist pig oozing oily insincerity from every overstuffed pore.

Once enlightened by the righteously indignant Green Arrow, who gives him "a guided tour of how the other half lives—if you can call it living!" [p. 4], Green Lantern comes on like a wide-eyed innocent who has just learned there is such a thing as evil in the world, explaining his previous blindness to social injustice as the result of monumental naivete; "How often

THAT'S GONNA HAPPEN TOMORROW-- AT DAWN... 'LESS WE STOP IT! AN' WE'RE GONNA--
WE'RE GONNA JUMP SLAPPER'S PLACE TONIGHT!
YOU BLASTED AT US BECAUSE YOU MISTOOK US FOR MORE HOODS, HUH?
WELL, MISTER, YOU WERE WRONG!
YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET SOME FIRST-CLASS HELP!-- EXPERIENCE GUARANTEED!
HOLD ON, GREEN ARROW! THIS IS NONE OF OUR BUSINESS... IF THIS SOAMES IS REALLY IN CHARGE--
OH, BOY! NOW I'VE HEARD IT ALL... BECAUSE SOAMES MUSCLED HIS WAY INTO AUTHORITY, HE'S A GOOD GUY, HUH?
PAL, HITLER WAS THE "BOSS" OF GERMANY, REMEMBER? AND THERE WAS GHENGIS KHAN, NERO..
THROUGH-OUT HISTORY, CHEAP PUNKS HAVE MADE THEMSELVES LEADERS! REGARDLESS OF THEIR TITLES, THEY WERE STILL CHEAP PUNKS!
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THE PEASANTS PREPARE AN ATTACK, LEADER!
FINE! GIVE THE BOYS THE WORD AN' REMEMBER--ONLY KILL 'BOUT A THIRD OF 'EM!! THE REST GOTTA BE BACK TO WORK IN THE MORNIN'!
AN' KNOCK OFF THAT LEADER STUFF! YOU AIN'T STILL WORKIN' FOR ADOLF!
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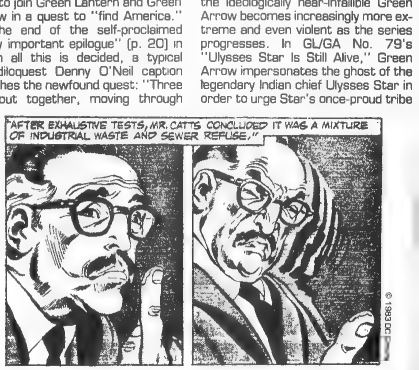
have I made that vow [to fight villainy] ... and until today, I believed what I was saying! ... [Somehow] I've lived this long without learning that bad doesn't have to be [anything as obvious as] a bug-eyed monster or a mad scientist—" [p. 7]. Shaken by his tour of the slum and by his inability to defend himself against a black bystander's accusation that "You work for the blue skins ... and on a planet someplace you helped out the orange skins ... and you done considerable for the purple skins! Only there's skins you never bothered with—the black skins!" [p. 8], Green Lantern capitulates completely. Instead of answering that by saving Earth half a dozen times, he has done as much for "black skins" as he has for any other group, which a number of readers pointed out in the letter column would have been the logical [though perhaps politically inadequate] reply, GL, let down by the narrowly legalistic precepts of his old mentors, the Guardians turns helplessly to the black man and Green Arrow and asks pleadingly, "Okay ... maybe I have been a dummy! So tell me ... how do I help?" The black man, too sensible to think that anyone can really learn by simply appointing someone else to act as his conscien- answers, "I'm no advice committee ... if you want to bad enough, you'll find a way!"

Green Arrow, predictably, is less forbearing. Much of the action of this issue and the succeeding ones consists of Green Arrow laying out detailed strategies for fighting various social ills, strategies which Green Lantern either obediently helps carry out or momentarily rebels against only to have the archer proven right, even when all the evidence, not to mention common sense, suggests otherwise. Although Green Lantern's own ideological dependence on Green Arrow comes to very quite a bit in later issues, in this introductory story, even the supposedly all-knowing Guardians end up bowing to the angry archer's superior moral authority [manifested by overheated rhetorical appeals to "Remember America ... it's a good country ... beautiful ... fertile ... and terribly sick! ... Something is wrong! Something is killing us all ...! Some hideous moral cancer is rotting our very souls!", p. 21]. When the Guardians inquire "How would you advise us?," the brash social crusader tells them to "Come off your perch! ... Learn where we're at ... and why!" [p. 22] - rather impractical advice for a group with obligations to the people of thousands of other individual planets throughout the universe, many of which undoubtedly have social situations just as complex and troubled as America's. Despite this, the Guardians conclude that he is right, and delegate one of their numbers to join Green Lantern and Green Arrow in a quest to "find America." At the end of the self-proclaimed "very important epilogue" [p. 20] in which all this is decided, a typical grandiloquent Denny O'Neil caption launches the newfound quest: "Three set out together, moving through cities and villages and the majesty of the wilderness ... searching for a special kind of truth ... searching for themselves ..." [p. 23].

The radically new analysis of America and its problems that Green Lantern and the Guardians are guided to by Green Arrow in "No Evil Shall Escape My Sight" essentially involves nothing more opposed to traditional Lantern Corps methods than a heightened social and political awareness and a less narrowly-defined conception of which problems it is appropriate for superheroes to attempt to solve. Although Green Arrow's impatience with the limitations of the legal system is obvious even in this first story, his penchant for drastic measures of dubious morality and practicality is merely hinted at in his use of rather extreme entrapment techniques in an attempt to incriminate Slade, the slimy slumlord. [In the hope of goading Slade into making an attempt on his, Green Arrow's, life, GA demands that the bloodsucking landlord pay him $25,000 to let his henchmen go about their business unharmed. The contract Slade puts out on the archer's life as a result of this ultimately enables the two heroes to have the slippery slumlord arrested by a district attorney who has tried vainly for years to nail Slade with a charge that will stick.

However, the tactics advocated by the ideologically near-infallible Green Arrow becomes increasingly more extreme and even violent as the series progresses. In GL/GA No. 79's "Ulysses Star Is Still Alive," Green Arrow impersonates the ghost of the legendary Indian chief Ulysses Star in order to urge Star's once-proud tribe



to forcibly resist a rapacious lumber union's attempt to steal their forest preserve. That the archer means his admonition to "fight for your rights!" (p. 16) literally is made clear by his reaction when Green Lantern flies in to stop the battle (which would probably have accomplished nothing but getting a number of Indians killed) at the last minute, promising a government ivestigation by a congressman sympathetic to the tribe's cause. When Green Lantern urges both Indians and lumbermen to disperse peacefully, his hotheaded colleague explodes, "Sure ... go home—sit on your hands—like always! Be nice while you're being robbed blind! Can it, Lantern! Go crawl back to your pals, the Guardians!" (p. 18). Green Lantern, finally fed up with his friend's self-proclaimed moral superiority, takes this as a personal challenge, and a brutal and totally unnecessary two-page fistfight ensues.

In the hands of Adams and O'Neil, this essentially pointless battle becomes a moment of high drama symbolic of the larger inner struggle convulsing America as a whole. Adams' lyrically detailed depiction of the fight is filled with Significant Details like the two heroes tearing off each other's masks while the hushed crowd of people involved in the Indian land dispute watches their titanic struggle in open-mouthed awe. O'Neill mixes his own pseudo-poetic purple prose with a long quote from Norman Mailer's **Armies of the Night** in portentously overblown captions that hammer home the greater significance of this rather sordid squabble for anyone too dense to see it from the art alone:

> The raging mob suddenly stills... becomes only a quiet group of human beings, sensing the drama of the moment without understanding it—awed, they watch the conflict reduced to starkly basic terms—the elemental struggle between two men—each fired by a belief in justice! Both unable to understand the reason for their terrible need to hit, to destroy... the masks fall, and they look, they see, and they know they are looking upon their nation, their world, in the agonized expression of a friend's face—and in that horrible moment, a line from a book crosses Green Lantern's mind: "Brood on that country who expresses our will...she is America—once a beauty of magnificence unparalleled, now a beauty with leprous skin...God writhes in his bonds. Rush to the locks ... Deliver us from our curse ..." (pp. 19-20)

At this point, with heavy-handed irony, Green Lantern and Green Arrow are both knocked out by the same falling log from a pile of lumber in the river they have tumbled into.

What is disturbing about this entire sequence is that although it is evidently intended to convey the horror of violence among people who should be friends and brothers - a point which is explicitly made on the final pages of the story - its effect is just the opposite. The emphasis on the awe and magnificent power of the confrontation expressed by O'Neil's captions, coupled with Adams' celebrated ability to make even the most appalling scenes ethereally beautiful, tend to poeticize the very violence the author/artist team professes to condemn. Instead of demonstrating how degrading it is for two friends to resort to nearly bashing each other's head in, the two-page fight sequence transforms a stupid, pointless brawl into an unreal, horrifyingly beautiful ritual whose pain remains remote, unfelt and unbelieved in by the reader.

Although both men take such a beating that they should be suffering from concussion, at least for days afterward, on the next page they are shown sitting in the reservation cafe sipping coffee almost immediately after the fight - bandaged, to be sure, but showing no signs of pain. The unintended but inevitable message is

WELL...ARE YOU AS KNOCKED OUT BY THAT AS I AM?
NOT EXACTLY...
THERE ARE WAYS AND WAYS...AND I DON'T THINK CHILDISH PRANKS WILL SOLVE ANYTHING!
AGGGGG, BROTHER! YOU MAKE THE AVERAGE WET BLANKET LOOK LIKE A DESERT! YOU TICKED OFF BECAUSE ISAAC HAPPENED TO HIT THE FERRIS OUTFIT...
THE OUTFIT OWNED BY YOUR GIRL FRIEND CAROL? OR IS IT YOUR PIOUS VOW AND ORDER NUMBER AGAIN?
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that a little violence beween friends does no harm and may even clear the air of accumulated tensions [neither man shows any resentment of the other's brutally irrational behaviour]. Indeed, the Earthbound Guardian [who had distinguished himself earlier in the story by making a profoundly ambivalent statement about how the violence engrained in the American character, deplorable as it is, "shows a great spirit—a spirit which properly channeled can take you beyond the stars!", p. 5], concludes that the semi-fratricidal fist-fight has actually been a beckhandedly beneficial experience for the two heroes, since, "If you did not settle the matter, you at least learned ... that the strife which rends your nation—your world-must cease!" [p. 22].

In this story, as in a number of others, the Problem of the Month is officially solved by Green Lantern's flying in at the last minute with a sympathetic public official to straighten things out, or at least put the worst problems on hold. However, so much more space is devoted here to the violence of GL and GA's attempt to settle their dispute over whether it is more effective to work inside or outside the system that when GL's congressman friend finally provides proof that the system does work, though with frustrating slowness, the plug for the peaceful, legal methods preferred by Green Lantern comes as a rather half-hearted anticlimax. Especially since in this case, the system seems to have worked only by the fluke of a far-reaching confession made by a hireling of the corrupt lumber union, who was apparently picked up by police on a totally unrelated charge. Here, as in many other stories in the series which glorify Green Arrow's radical social conscience to the point of presenting his most hotheadedly inflammatory solutions as acceptable or even heroic, O'Neil and Adams come perilously close to explicitly condoning an end-justifies-the-means philosophy as long as it's in a good cause. In this issue and in many others, the book continually runs the risk of seeming to endorse a little strategic violence as an effective and unobjectionable way of solving vast, complicated problems.

The most extreme example of this tendency is "... And Through Him Save a World ..." in GL/GA No. 89,

the final issue of the series. The story opens with Green Arrow roaring with mirth over a newspaper report that an environmental activist called Isaac has plastered a mixture of industrial waste and sewer refuse over the walls of a branch office of Ferris Aircraft to protest the company's experimentation with a pollution-causing new airplane fuel. Green Lantern's objection that "I don't think childish pranks will solve anything" [p. 3] is far above the level of his usual silly scruples over entering a villain's house without an invitation [No. 83] or using his ring against a homicidal maniac of a judge whom he knows has wrongfully usurped the authority GL is conditioned to respect [No. 80, p. 19]. But GL's disapproving viewpoint is given short shrift by both Green Arrow and the author, who undercuts Green Lantern's credibility as a newly-converted liberal who has retained a sensible amount of his old caution about flouting the law by having the hero revert to a semblance of his old blind faith in authority a few pages later. When GL's diffident question to his girlfriend Carol Ferris, owner of the aircraft company in question, about the possible environmental ill effects of the new fuel receives the glib answer, "We'll solve the environment difficulties when they arise!", Green Lantern unhesitatingly accepts this perfunctory sop to social awareness and reaffirms his old unquestioning devotion to the omnipotent virtue of technology for its own sake: "I believe it! American technicians can generally solve [any problem]" [p. 9].

The dangers of the radical Isaac's politically-motivated industrial vandalism are made clear on the very same page by the collapse of a gigantic drainage rig he had tampered with, which would have crushed Carol Ferris and one of her employees if Green Lantern had not been there to save them. But although Green Lantern is justifiably incensed at this reckless disregard for innocent people's safety, the events of the story as a whole suggest that such carelessness is acceptable, perhaps even laudable, as long as it's in a good cause. Although Isaac, when located, is momentarily shaken by the news that people nearly died because of his well-intentioned action, Green Arrow refuses to even take the incident seriously and angrily berates his friend for taking such a narrow-minded view of the matter: "Lantern ... you're dense! Can't you understand Isaac's obeying a higher law than any of man's? A few of Ferris' lackeys are inconvenienced! Is that

worse than the ruin of a planet ... our world?" [p. 14].

When GL stubbornly insists on arresting Isaac anyway, the hotheaded archer forcibly prevents him from doing so by knocking him out with sleeping gas from a smoke arrow. Isaac's reaction to this is instructive. He is revolted by Green Arrow's hasty action, not because the archer unjustifiably harmed his friend, but because he did it in a way that momentarily polluted the environment. "You ... filth!" Isaac spits at the astonished Green Arrow. "You're as bad as the rest ... releasing foulness into our precious atmosphere! You pretend to love your fellow man—but your actions reveal you to be a liar!" [p. 15].

Despite these high-sounding final words, Isaac is obviously less concerned with the overall welfare of his fellow man than with the idea of clean air for its own sake. This is perhaps only natural since he himself is suffering from lung disease that will prove fatal unless he succeeds in finding some environment completely untouched by industrial pollution. However, the author's presentation of these events, especially his apparent unawareness that Isaac's altruism would have been a lot more convincing if O'Neil had bothered to have him express concern over the fallen Green Lantern as well as over the temporarily gas-polluted environment, gives the entire story an undertone of unquestioning approval of a recklessly fanatical leftist approach to social change. When carried to its logical extreme, the philosophy this story presents with such sympathy is virtually indistinguishable from the attitude of the notorious Vietnam commander who claimed, "In order to save the village, we had to destroy it."

After being informed by Green Lantern of the unforeseen consequences of his previous vandalism, Isaac abandons tactics which are potentially harmful to others in favor of ones likely to prove fatal to himself. But although Isaac's crucifying himself on the nose of the much-disputed experimental plane does make a dramatic political statement without endangering anyone but himself, the effectiveness of this statement in halting the development of the new fuel seems likely to be absolutely nil, since the only people aware of it are anti-environmentalist Ferris employees, who stereotypically prove only too happy to put off testing the plane over the weekend so Isaac can hang there long enough to die from the strain. Isaac's suicidal action and his self-righteous refusal to even consider a compromise when Green Arrow tries desperately to talk the irate Ferris workers into taking him down from his improvised cross, hardly seem the evidence of unalloyed heroism that O'Neil suggests by his use of heavy-handed parallels with the martyrdom of Christ (the one-dimensionally evil Ferris employees end up stringing up Green Lantern and Green Arrow alongside Isaac like the two thieves in the Biblical account of the Crucifixion) and by the exalted eulogy he has the usually restrained Green Lantern give the dead environmentalist: "[He was] mad with a nobility far beyond any you or I can even aspire to!" [p. 24].

The uneven quality of the **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** series as a whole is in large part due to O'Neil's inchoate near-despair over the multitudinous leprous sores on the face of the American Dream frequently causes him to drag so many social issues into each story that he lacks sufficient space to adequately explore the causes and possible solutions of any of them. Too often this results in stories where even the intense social consciousness that overpowers the more traditional elements of four-color storytelling becomes garbled and diffuse, reducing the all-important Message of the Month to nothing more coherent than, "Some hideous moral cancer is rotting our very souls! We must DO SOMETHING!"

The O'Neil/Adams story that is most free of these characteristic flaws, and most convincingly constructed in terms of plot and characterization to boot, is the two-part drug addiction story in GL/GA Nos. 85-86. At first glance, it seems absurd to assert that these two issues are the least crippled by O'Neil's obsession with making a statement about the desperate state of American society, since their very covers are heavily drenched in melodramatically "relevant" didacticism. Plastering the cover of GL/GA No. 85 with the headline, "The Shocking Truth About Drugs!" and following this up with even more heavy-handedly "concerned" cover messages on the following issue, was certainly a grave tactical error which undoubtedly alienated many members of the very audience the comics

creators were so desperately trying to reach. After all, what kid in his right mind, potential drug addict or otherwise, would be eager or even willing to buy a comic that advertises "An Important Message From the Honorable John V. Lindsey, Mayor of New York City" as an enticing incentive?

Whoever was responsible for the disastrous cover messages and for the patronizing headline, "An Important Message For YOU!" over the much-vaunted communique from Lindsey in GL/GA No. 86, the stories themselves "Snowbirds Don't Fly" in No. 85 and "They Say 'It'll Kill Me ... But They Won't Say When" in No. 86 - succeed in meshing storytelling and social concern much better than any of the other issues of the series and convey the full ramifications of addiction much more effectively than the earlier **Spider-Man** drug issues (**Amazing Spider-Man** Nos. 96-98, reprinted in **Marvel Tales** Nos. 77-79) or the recent Iron Man alcoholism story, "Demon in a Bottle (**Iron Man** No. 128, Nov. '79).

For once, because definitely illegal activities are indisputably involved, the superheroes' involvement with the problem does not have to be justified by overblown rhetoric from Green Arrow or by contrived plot situations which distort the nature and causes of the difficulty in order to reduce it to dimensions two slightly super individuals can handle. Except in Speedy's moralizing rant about "the kind of pain thousands of kids are going through every day because an uncaring and unthinking society turns trip is like, the ever-present danger of overdose, how the inexorable demands of an expensive habit can lead to crime and to humiliation at the hands of pushers, and just how awful withdrawal symptoms really are. GL/GA Nos. 85-86's plethora of vividly-presented scenes of junkie life as experienced by Speedy and three of his friends stand in sharp contrast to the stereotyped portrayal of Peter Parker's roommate Harry Osborn's brief addiction to pills in the earlier **Spider-Man** drug issues. Although the **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** drug story would never have been possible without Stan Lee's courageous decision to confront the issue of drugs for the first time in post-Wertham comics history, despite the Comics Code's refusal to give the resulting stories its seal of approval, the **Spider-Man** issues forfeit much of their potential impact by handling Harry's pill problem as just one more running subplot in the soap operatic life of Peter Parker. Harry's motive for turning to drugs (jealousy over his then-girlfriend Mary Jane Watson's persistent flirting with Peter) is contrived and unbelievable and the bad trip that results (which seems more like a nervous breakdown aggravated by an excess of pills) is trivialized by being used to add cheap melodrama to a confrontation between Spider-Man and the Green Goblin, who is actually Harry's mentally disturbed father, Norman Osborn. Once Peter manages to get his roommate to the hospital despite the Green Goblin's interference, Harry virtually vanishes its back on them!" in the final page and a half of "They Say It'll Kill Me ..." (No. 86, pp. 24-25), the dialogue effectively avoids turning into the thinly-disguised soapbox sermons O'Neil favors elsewhere. The attitudes toward drugs and drug addicts expressed by the various characters are convincingly consistent with the characterizations previously established. This is especially noteworthy in the case of Green Arrow, whose rigidly contemptuous attitude toward anyone who knowingly engages in activities the archer considers wrong is finally shown to be less an admirable source of righteous anger against racists and pollution-mongers than an emotional and ideological rigidity which causes him to reject his "son" Speedy just when the boy needs him most. This belated, but well-handled, acknowledgment of the dark side of Green Arrow's intolerant self-righteousness and the sensitive handling of Speedy's gradual revelation that he wasn't consorting with junkies just to find out who the head pusher was, as his purblind guardian blithely assumes, puts the characterization in these two issues head and shoulders above O'Neil's usual depiction of heroes and villains alike as little more than puppets in a modern morality play.

Perhaps most impressive is O'Neil and Adams' decision to focus on the drug traffic from all angles, allotting sufficient time and space to explore in some depth the variety of reasons both minority and middle class kids turn to drugs, what a bad (and good)

GUESS HE WAS KINDA CRAZY!
GURR HE WAS... MAD WITH A NOBILITY FAR BEYOND ANY YOU OR I CAN EVEN ASPIRE TO!
I SUPPOSE PROGRESS MUST ALWAYS CLAIM VICTIMS!

Perhaps most impressive is O'Neil and Adams' decision to focus on the drug traffic from all angles, allotting sufficient time and space to explore in some depth the variety of reasons both minority and middle class kids turn to drugs, what a bad (and good) trip is like, the ever-present danger of overdose, how the inexorable demands of an expensive habit can lead to crime and to humiliation at the hands of pushers, and just how awful withdrawal symptoms really are. GL/GA #85-86's plethora of vividly-presented scenes of junkie life as experienced by Speedy and three of his friends stand in sharp contrast to the stereotyped portrayal of Peter Parker's roommate Harry Osborn's brief addiction to pills in the earlier **Spider-Man** drug issues. Although the **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** drug story would never have been possible without Stan Lee's courageous decision to confront the issue of drugs for the first time in post-Wertham comics history, despite the Comics Code's regusal to give the resulting stories its seal of approval, the **Spider-Man** issues forfeit much of their potential impact by handling Harry's pill problem as just one more running subplot in the soap operatic life of Peter Parker. Harry's motive for turning to drugs (jealousy over his then-girlfriend Mary Jane Watson's persistent flirting with Peter) is contrived and unbelievable, and the bad trip that results (which seems more like a nervous breakdown aggravated by an excess of pills) is trivialized by being used to add cheap melodrama to a confrontation between Spider-Man and the Green Goblin, who is actually Harry's mentally disturbed father, Norman Osborn. Once Peter manages to get his roommate to the hospital despite the Green Goblin's interference, Harry virtually vanishes from the book while he recovers and kicks the habit off-panel.

Obviously the mere admission that even a hero's best friend might turn to drugs was more realism than the Comics Code could stand at that point, but GL/GA No. 85's graphic depiction of withdrawal symptoms (pp. 8-12) and No. 86's detailed portrayal of the agonies of kicking the habit cold turkey (pp. 19, 18) convey the seriousness of the problem much more convincingly, largely due to Adams' moving art and effective panel breakdowns, which trace the withdrawal process stage by painful stage. This step-by-step attention to the ill effects of addiction and its aftermath, which derives much of its impact from the emotional power and technical excellence of the art, is the main reason the **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** drug issues remain clearly superior to even more recent efforts like David Michelinie and Bob Layton's impressive "Demon in a Bottle" in **Iron Man** No. 128. "Demon in a Bottle" spends so much time establishing the motives for Tony Stark's growing dependence on alcohol that it ends up cramming the intense agonies of his first few days as a non-drinker into one skimpy, ineffectively laid-out page that is deprived of much conviction because of Layton's pedestrian art. Because of this crucial inadequacy in its presentation of Stark's drunkard progress, "Demon in a Bottle" inspired some complaints that it made alcoholism appear to be something that could be licked in a few days with the help of friends, with no need for professional help from groups like Alcoholics Anonymous. GL/GA Nos. 85-86 lays itself open to similar charges by virtue of Speedy's insistence on quitting drugs cold turkey without any help beyond the food, shelter and ineffectual attempts at comfort Black Canary can provide, but this fades into insignificance beside the inescapable fact that nobody can finish reading these issues without being convinced that addiction really hurts.

Green Lantern/Green Arrow Nos. 85-86 provide heartbreakingly excellent proof of what O'Neil and Adams could accomplish when they really set their minds to it—heartbreaking because in every other **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** story they did, the team fell far short of what they were capable of achieving. The thought, concern and artistry that went into each issue make even the most flawed GL/GA story so much more fascinating than the unimaginative, routine productions that monopolize most of the space on the comic book racks that it is doubly frustrating to see so many of the stories fail because of insufficient artistic and ideological focus and incoherent attempts at conveying ill-defined and over-generalized messeges. If there is no heavier burden for an artist than a great potential, there is no greater frustration for a reader than watching an artist repeatedly fail to live up to that potential. The O'Neil/Adams **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** was an intensely frustrating book.

At the Creation Con.

A DISCUSSION WITH MARV WOLFMAN, ROGER SLIFER, KEITH GIFFEN, AND MIKE DECARLO.

THE OMEGA MEN

Wolfman: We've got, what I consider from the first and second issues that we've finished and we've worked on the third one, one of the best books that I've seen in a long time. It's a book that's come together in a very strange fashion because the Omega Men were not supposed to be. They were ghosts originally, and that's all they were.

I was doing an issue of **Green Lantern**. I was the writer of the Green Lantern book, Joe Staton was the artist. I needed an in-between issue. I had just done a very long story line. Hal Jordan and Carol Ferris went on vacation and they had a little ghost story -- just a one issue, throw away story. I'm sitting there over the typewriter, trying to come up with something, trying to make it a little bit different, because I don't just want to do a ghost story. "What if the ghosts had some super powers?" As soon as I started thinking in terms of giving these ghosts super powers I had to think, "Where did these powers come from?" It started to develop, it started to move, it started to grow. By the end of the day, the Omega Men were born. These characters were tied into the Starfire story line from the Teen Titans -- tying it to this background it started to work out.

The thing was, at the time I had come up with this still one issue story to Green Lantern, they were called outcasts because they were cast out of their own planetary system. So, I'm plotting the issue and this thing starts growing -- it's this thing that's out of control in a sense. The characters started coming together. All the characters, with the exception of Calisto, were named that very first day. I just sat there with a dictionary and a thousand other little thesauruses, every version of words I could find so all the names came together. Calisto's original name -- I happened to find the list today as I was looking to see if I still had it--was Jezibelle or something and I said, "Nah, that's awful. That's a typical name." So I just took the moon of Jupiter and turned it into Calisto. There was also an unseen--and thank God I never did anything with him--

character for the Omega Men called Blot, which was this big black spot that would go around killing people and would recite poetry at the same time. There was something special, even in those early stories -- I had a sense that there was going to be more to the Omega Men than just throw-away characters in the Green Lantern.

Unlike typical policy which is that if you have a bunch of heroes or villains that you're throwing into an issue, you just have the artist design it as he's doing the story, we actually had Joe Staton come up with all the visuals. We worked over the visuals and I had logos developed for the characters. This was two and a half, three years ago, before we had any idea that the Omega Men was going to

HE IS THE SHAME OF OUR RACE!
HAS HE NOT TOLD THOU OF HIS BREACH OF GREAT CONSEQUENCE?
NO MATTER. KNOW YE THAT THY VISIT IS WITHOUT REWARD. WE ARE AT PEACE WITH THE CITADEL.
YOU HAVE MADE PEACE WITH THEM!?
© 1983 DC Comics
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be a book. The thing was just starting to grow because of itself, which is a good sign because things take control. The Omega Men were finally brought into a three part story in the **Green Lantern**. They later went on to **Teen Titans** and **Action Comics** and back to **Green Lantern**. One month from now the first regularly scheduled direct sale comic book from any major comic book company that is aimed for direct sales from the beginning. They're not just books that have been turned into direct sale comics. The **Omega Men** is the first book of it's sort that's a regular on-going series.

Slifer: What we have been trying to do on the series is develop the characters that Marv has established a little further, getting into their backgrounds, getting into their types of roles, and the concepts that are going on in their star system. We're trying to do the type of comic that we think people want to see.

Wolfman: Let me say that the book is being produced on the same type of paper as **Camelot 3000** which is high quality Baxter paper. It will bear a dollar price tag, because it's on that special off-set material. We're trying to do something a little bit special with it. The stories are very well thought out. They're good stories. The characterization is very strong. The cover is a full painting. A lot of effort has been put into this book, months upon months of work. On top of the regular work that we've done there's even extra costs. When you see the cover coloring, the logo is in a fifth color. Comic books are normally printed as a four color job. To pay for a fifth color is very expensive. We have a fifth color on there because it looked--it was the best color. We had to go with that particular one for that cover. We're spending a lot of time producing this and we're spending a lot of time making sure these characters are very interesting. If you've read the Omega Men before and didn't like it, I think you'll find that you will like it now. Roger is doing a bang-up job with the writing; the artwork is just magnificent; I'm very pleased with the editing of the book.

Question: Who is doing the coloring on the books?

Giffen: I was going to do the coloring on all the books, but I don't have a lot of time. Petra Goldberg is going to be coloring the books. He did a lot of the Dr. Strange material.

Since the Omega Men appeared in **Green Lantern** things have changed. The simplest reason is that I'd like you to like it. I feel comfortable with the characters. I didn't change it arbitrarily. I go through Roger and then we get it approved by Marv. It reminded me too much of Thor. Cavemen with Joan Crawford padded shoulders.

Question: Does the book compare to the **X-Men**?

Giffen: That question was raised when we first came up with the Omega Men because they happened to be a league of super heroes, super villains, or super whatever on Earth. That was the only similarity. These are outcasts from their native galaxy who are going back as fast as possible. This is a regular series. It's the first series from a major comic book company made for a direct sale audience. That means that right from the beginning, the people here are trying to produce a story for an intelligent reader.

I'm so happy with the book. The stories are really very good. The second issue is a very, very good story.

Slifer: We're trying to develop an alien culture. We're trying to use words and phrases that reflect that. At the same time we have to make sure that it's comprehensible to people.

Question: Do you intend to remain with this book?

DeCarlo: I intend to remain on the book for a number of reasons. I enjoy working on the book like I've never enjoyed a book before. I enjoy working with Roger and Keith and Marv a lot. And, if the sales keep going the way they've been going it will make me a lot of money which is always a consideration.

Giffen: We have orders already for the first issue from our distributors who seem to think -- from talking to their

PROUD OF YOURSELF, PRIMUS? YOU JUST LED A ROUT OF WHAT MUST BE THE DREGS OF THE CITADEL'S MILITARY FORCES!
KEEP YOUR SARCASM TO YOURSELF, TIGORR. THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.
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retailers – that they're interested. We've been very gratified by the way they've ordered and we hope that they like it.

Slifer: We had a lot of trouble with the series. As a matter of fact some of my ideas coming out – like how we feel when the war is over and how we feel about it. We're having a lot of philisophical, political and allegorical type stories.

What we're trying to do is solidify the characters who are already there so that you have an idea of who we're working with to begin with, the beginning four of the Omega Men. Then we can introduce others.

II Wolfman, Colon New Talent Showcase Panel in progress...

Colon: Will we use a background artist and someone who does figures? We really prefer, I think, to use one person who can do it all. Maybe down the line, they may want to get their own background person to work with them. That's their own job or whatever. We're not interested in that. We want to develop artists who are going to work on their own and will do the whole job, pencil and ink as well.

Wolfman: There are people who I've worked with who I feel have talent yet aren't quite at the level where I feel I can use them on this book. I don't want to let go of them and say, "Go home and work in isolation and learn by yourself." I'd rather they came to see me and I could give them some tips. The reason I'm telling you this is not to show you what a great guy I am, but rather to tell you something that I think is really important. The Tyro book is really unprecidented. It's a very good book; it took us years to do. Some of the people whose work you're seeing – it's incredible. They're being used as professionals. It's wonderful. The only reason that's true is that DC made it possible for that to happen. They encouraged me to do this with young people who have talent, so they don't spend years and years...during which time they may become very discouraged and not go into the field at all. Our field doesn't need that. It doesn't need discouraged talent; it needs to encourage young people. What DC is doing is important. I want to tell them that we're available. People say how do I get in touch with...

Colon: One of the nice things is that when Jennete Kahn came up with the idea for the book, we were told that we could buy an awful lot of material and then just write it off. That is just work with the people, pay them for doing the material and then if it's not what we really want, they'll still be paid...we don't have to publish it. So we're spending an awful lot of money just trying to help develop new talent and we hope – one of the hopes is that these people who start at DC may stay at DC. They may not, they may go on, whatever. But we just hope that we'll be able to bring in people and we'll get very good books because of that.

Question: What are you looking for?

Colon: What I'm interested in seeing is a plot that is nothing more than a page or two, double spaced, typed – no hand written scripts – that tells me a little about what the story is, who the characters are, what is interesting about the characters and why I should like this series more than I like something else. One of the things that we get in abundance is a variance of other comic book series running around out there, 86,000 Batmans, 33,000 Supermans, and 18 billion Conans – I mean everyone is doing Conan. And they're all alike, every single story. Nothing is unique. What we're interested in is a difference. So far I've bought only two Sword and Sorcery things, both of which were different. Different enough for me to be willing to look at it. One was a female barbarian who happened to have her son tagging around with her. That makes it different. The fact is that now you're emphasising the relationship between a mother and her son as well as having a Sword and Sorcery type of approach. The other is just a one-shot story that is not a series as the woman with the son is. We have science fiction stories in here. We have one-shot and series ideas. We have westerns...anything that can fit into any subject matter what-so-ever. One of the other things that I've been discovering and this is the sad part of it – I'll work with a writer for a while and a lot of them want to break in but they're not willing to do the work after. You'll spend the time and you'll work up a plot and then they'll never return. They just don't. It means to me that most of them would like to write, but they don't really want to work at it. One of the ways you get into this business is perseverance. You've got to be there, you've got to keep trying, you've got to want it more than

anyone else. If you don't someone else will come in. They may not even be as talented as you are, but only perseverance is going to get you there. If you've made an appointment, if you've worked out something with a person, you should be able to go onto the next step and actually deliver it. But I tend to say that about half of the scripts we've worked out, people don't even bother because it's a lot of work. They think their first version is going to be sold. So far there hasn't been a single person who has managed to sell their very first story. They had to go back for several re-writes and several plot sessions. There is invariably something missing. Out the hundred scripts I've looked at, I think I've bought fifteen or twenty so far. Again, all of these have required several re-writes.

Question: Who owns the rights to the story?

Wolfman: DC owns it. It's a regular comic – it's the same contract that I sign, that Mike Barr signs, that Len signs, that any of our writers or artists sign. It means that if the book sells over one hundred thousand copies you get percentages of that. It's not a seperate contract. You are breaking in as a new professional. We do not use amateurs. We pay for your material with DC beginning rates. You're treated just like any other professional and we expect that sort of work from you. We're not looking for amateurs.

Question: Does it help if you have outside background first?

Wolfman: It means nothing to me. I don't care where you come from, who you are – I'm only interested in the material I'm handed. You may have gone through college, you may not be out of high school, you may not even be in high school, I don't care. I've had several professional animation writers – because I'm sure you've all heard how bad the animation business is out in Hollywood – who are used to getting about fifty times what we do for their scripts, and they submitted material and I sent it right back because they may know animation very well but they don't know comics. So, I really don't care what your background is. I'm only interested in the material presensented.

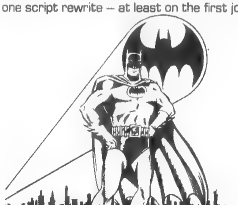
Question: Is there any difference between regular print fiction and comics?

Wolfman: With story structure there is no difference. It's just the way you present the material. All stories have to get in a middle, high points, low points and whatever else you're going to have in the story. A good story is a good story. You have to know how to adapt it to the medium you're working in.

Question: What kinds of stories are you looking for?

Wolfman: One of the things that I'm very proud of is that we are buying all sorts of strange material. In the very first story there's a script writer, Kellogg, it's a pirate strip. Where in the world are you going to sell a pirate strip to anybody today. The second strip in the book reminds one of a Juvenile. It's a nice science fiction story. I happen to like Juveniles very much. He presented it and it had a beautiful feeling and–I wish I could remember the name of it. "The Class of 3064" or something like that, I don't remember the year the class is of but it's a very nice strip. Again this is a different kind of material. I'm not interested in seeing what I've seen before. There's only been one or two superheroes that I've bought. I'd love to buy more superheroes, but everyone is presenting the same superheroes that I've seen before. So I'm not interested in that.

Let me go through the stages that we work with. We start with the plot. We'll work on the plot, you'll go back and redo the plot until it's where we want it. Then you go through a page break-down. That is – what happens on page one, what happens on page two, etc. The reason I do that is that a lot of writers tend to think that they can put more material on a page than they actually can. When you tell them to go back and really break down the story correctly, they'll discover that they're going to have 47 panels on page two. You sort of have to even that out. So we go through that stage. Sometimes there's a rewrite necessary, sometimes there isn't. Then we go to the script. In every case we've had at least one script rewrite – at least on the first job. That-



doesn't happen very often on the second job a writer has done. They work up the material and go over it. When the script is accepted, that's when we give you the vouchers to sign and the contracts to sign and that's when you get paid. DC pays within a few days.

Question: Which one of you handles what?

Wolfman: I work with the writers, Ernie works with the artists. What happens is, after I've gone over a script, Ernie and I go over the materials, talk about it, and then try to match up one of the artists in his portfolio with the material – who would be best suited to that particular story. So you don't have to come in with an artist. Some people have. The Pirate strip – the writer and the artist came in together. A few other strips that's happened

too but, for the most part, we've matched up the people.

Question: What does a potential creator need to know.

Wolfman: It helps if the writer or artist has a strong visual sense because then he'll know what he can actually do. Again, you don't want 12 panels per page and you don't want three actions taking place in the same panel. A lot of writers do that. One of the stories we had, I worked with the writer -- it took about five hours -- five seperate sessions -- we finally got to the stage of the script, and the script came in with seven or eith panel pages with 300 words per panel. I sent it back. You'd think you'd know after reading comics this long that you can't set 300 words in a panel and seven or eight panels a page. And that tends to be a common mistake. Maybe it's not 300 words, for some people it's 75, but it's still eight panels a page and you just can't fit that many words. Go through the **X-Men**. That has the tiniest type

CAR TOTALLY CONSUMED BY FIRE. BODIES BURNED BEYOND RECOGNITION. VERY NICE. VERY NEAT.
TROUBLE IS, THE SCENTS ARE WRONG.
I DO NOT UNDER-STAND.
IT'S A CON. SOMEONE WENT TO A HELLUVA LOT OF TROUBLE TO CONVINCE THE LAW-- AND US-- THAT CHARLEY SCOTT AN' "RORO" WERE KILLED IN A CAR CRASH.
© 1980 DC Comics

in the business and they can't even fit that much copy in. It's a lot of going over material. The good ones make it. That's all I can say.

Question: What is the limit on the full page of dialogue including captions?

Wolfman: I don't have any rules. Look at what a comic book can produce and then you'll have an idea what you can do.

Question: Suppose you don't live in the N.Y. area?

Wolfman: I work with a lot of writers outside the NY area. Send your scripts to me or whoever and about 9,000 years later we'll get back to you. I'm hoping to clear out all the material that's come in over the last few months within the next two or three weeks. At that point I think Roger Slifer may be taking over. I'm not certain.

It's a lot easier to work with you in person -- it really is because I can spend as much time as necessary explaining things. In a letter, I can only explain once.

Question: Suppose we bring you a new character and there's a copyright on it?

Wolfman: It's standard comic book purchasing procedure. As I said earlier, you'll be selling your rights along with it. What we try to do, and at DC we're very straight forward about this, is that you're the writer and we'll never take you off the strip and give it to someone else. If we like it well enough for us to take, we won't be doing that.

We will work with you. We'll send back the script and hope that you can do it. In one case we had an artist that came in with his own plot and his own script. He didn't really intend to be a writer but he had just written the story himself. The writing wasn't good. So we asked him, and he okayed it because he wasn't a writer and wasn't really interested in becoming one. We had someone else dialogue it over his plot. We paid him for the plot and the artwork of course and paid somebody else for the dialogue.

Question: What if it catches on?

Wolfman: If it becomes successful, like any other back feature, because this is being considered just features in a book, it will just go on to it's own book if it's really very popular. And the same team will work on it.

Question: How long do you have to wait for a response?

Wolfman: Some people have waited two weeks, some people are still waiting up to five months. Because of the way it comes in -- one of the problems that has existed up there is not only have I worked on this book, as the editor of the stories, but I've also had six other titles to work on and I only come in to DC two-and-a-half days a week. It has been very difficult to try and get to the material. I'm hoping to clear it out before someone else takes over on a full time basis. The people who are going to take over will be there five days a week. I just couldn't make it. I've been working as a writer and as an editor so it's been very difficult to try to do both. We progress as fast as we can, but people have waited. Don't send any scripts for about a month. The company is in the process of moving and it will take about a month for us to get settled down again.

Question: Will you take satire?

Wolfman: Not in the beginning. We have taken one humor story. I would like to -- since the idea of this book was an adventure book of one sort or another, and that could mean almost anything, we have been trying to stay away from history stories, war stories and humor. Once the book gets settled, about six issues into it, I'll have no problems about putting one humor story in, because there are four stories per issue. In case I haven't mentioned that, it's four eight page stories. So I'd be more than willing to put one humor story in the center and hope that the adventure readers will put up with one story.

The book should be out sometime in June or July. We're trying to stock pile as much material as we can

simply because it takes an awful lot of time to work with everybody. As I said, there are four stories so we really have to start about a year and a half in advance. We're still buying.

III. Wolfman, Sanderson History of the DC Universe

Wolfman: To give you a little bit of background on this before we progress any further, about a year and a half ago, maybe two years ago, at a Creation-Con the whole thing sort of came together. It was down in Philadelphia. I had just written a letter column for **Green Lantern** and someone comented on how this ties in with this and this ties in with this -- you know that convoluted DC Universe that's out there. I got down to the Creation Con and Len Wein was there and Joe Staton was there and we were just talking at lunch. I said, "Wouldn't it be interesting if we just fixed all these mistakes that have been going on for the last forty years?" One of the worst things you can do in comics is say, "Wouldn't it be interesting if..." because everyone else is probably going to agree with you. So the following Monday we were still on fire about that, as happy as anything about this incredible idea, "Wouldn't it be interesting if..." I immediately ran into Jenette Kahn's office and said, "Wouldn't it be interesting if we could correct this?" And she said, "Yes, we'd have a book" Well, there's a little bit of a problem about agreeing to a concept of correcting all this DC Mythology: We've been around fourty-five years! There's a lot of books out there. There's also a lot of convoluted history and convoluted facts and everything. Peter [Sanderson] will give you some of the more esoteric facts of DC mythology. Len and I saw the enormous scope that this project would create, what was out there to do, all the work that was necessary, and we needed to check it out. We said, "No we can't do this, this is impossible." So we convinced the DC higher ups to hire sombody to read all the books -- that is every book DC has ever published for the most part. This poor sucker is the guy. Peter Sanderson, as you know, has been writing articles, doing interviews, etc. for magazines for ages. He's also an incredible compiler of information. He was the absolutely perfect person to do this sort of thing. He's been sitting up in the DC office since April I guess.

Sanderson: May.

Wolfman: May? See, he corrects all the information we give out. He's taking a half a dozen books from the library every day, reading through them, writing millions of little notes, and he's discovered all this information. He's now on, what letter?

Sanderson: S.

Wolfman: Which means he's only got a couple more books to go. And he'll actually have a fan's dream come true. I know I'd love to do it. It's certainly much better to be paid for it. He's read everything that DC has done. What the intent of this book is -- it's an open ended series that is supposed to run approximately twelve issues, it's going to correct all the DC mythology that has been screwed up in the past. Peter can sort of fill you in on a couple of things that he's spotted over the year.

Sanderson: The most infamous example that I've found so far is "Atlantis." Everyone knows about Atlantis. You've read about it in school and storybooks. Everyone wants to do his own Atlantis story. I made a list of all the

SCREAM SOUND OF SUPER-SONIC SOUND!
THE SHAZAM PRAYER ON HUMAN BRAINS!
BACKWARD THE ULTIMATE CRIMINAL!
DR. POLARIS--MASTER OF MAGNETISM!
STAR SAPPHIRE--MISTRESS OF MYSTIC MAGIC!
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Atlantis series that DC has out so I can pick up all the problems I can. First of all there's Superman's Atlantis and there's Aquaman's Atlantis -- but there are two of these. You have the present day's Aquaman's Atlantis which is pretty much the size of Manhattan under a dome. The Atlantis of the Aquaman series of the forties, however, is about the size of a city block under a dome. Then there's Lori Lemaris' Atlantis, the one with the mermaid from the Superman stories -- okay, that's another Atlantis. The trouble is that Lori's Atlantis has two different origins. In one of the Lois Lane stories, in which Lois Lane shows up in Atlantis on the day that is is going to sink. Then there's the story in which the Legion visits Earth before the age of the dinosaurs and runs into

the Atlantians. We do not get fish tails at that point. The Atlantaans get into a war with explorers from Krypton and eventually it's Kryptonians who sink Atlantis by making it super heavy. Then there's Wonder Woman's Atlantis. There's Captain Marvel's Atlantis that was raised to the surface. The inhabitants of the Ibis Atlantis. There's the Atlantis in the 40s Superman story. You step on this Atlantis and then float to the surface and you've got Superman's powers. Superman steps on it and he goes out of control. There's Batman's Atlantis of the 40s. Batman goes to Atlantis during World War II and finds out the Commies are trying to become allies with Atlantis. There's the Atomic Age Atlantis. It's Transported in time from Ancient Greece to the 1990s and they try to take over what's left of the world. Everybody likes Atlantis; everybody likes Hercules. There's **Hercules Unbound**. Remember the clean shaven, black haired Hercules who was bound to a rock for thousands of years? Does he have anything to do with Superman's Hercules who kept popping up in the Weisinger era stories? Or does this nice guy Hercules have anything to do with the Hercules who was trying to beat up Wonder Woman? And do they have anything to do with the Hercules who gives Captain Marvel his power and strength? I don't know. There are some stories you just don't know what to do with. There's a story set in 1943 in which Superman goes to Nazi Germany and puts an end to the war by beating up Hitler. In 1943! What do you do with a story like this besides forget it?

Wolfman: So in something like 350 pages you solve all this – everything we've ever done. From the oldest caracter in DC History to the most recent addition.

One of the concepts that we're working on in the history book is something that Heinlein did with a lot of his novels. He has a bunch of novels in his Future History series. They all stay in one consistant time line. He also has a number of novels that have nothing to do with this. What we're going to do is organize DC into two branches: The Time Line and the Non-Time Line stories. You can publish very good books that have nothing at all to do with the regular DC books. We have published several of those–we have **Warlord**, we have **Arak**, we have **Camelot**...that have nothing to do with any of the other DC Books. This allows us to produce good books just because they're good books.

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RICHARD GOLDWATER DISCUSSES THE FUTURE OF HUMOR COMICS

AN INTERVIEW BY HAL SCHUSTER

CF: You got into Archie Comics as a family affair type of thing, is that right?

Goldwater : That's correct. My dad, John Goldwater, created Archie in 1941 and the company has been successful through this date.

CF: How did you get involved, besides being part of the family?

Goldwater : Well, I just felt that comic publishing was a very fascinating business and had a lot of opportunity to create things. I've always felt that I've been creative. It gave me the opportunity to work with some very talented artists and writers and editorial people in the business.

CF: When did you first become involved? Did it come in stages? Did you sort of grow into the business?

Goldwater: Yes, it came in stages. I worked for Archie after school in the mail department. When I graduated college, I came in a worked in the shipping department and learned that area of the business. Then I learned the distribution part of the business. Then I gradually worked myself into the art department doing paste ups and mechanicals and learning all I could about editorial and art.

CF: Did you do any of the actual artwork or writing?

Goldwater: I did not do any of the actual artwork. I did some of the writing of the older Archie stories. Then I did eventually graduated into editorial where I was purchasing stories from the artists and just doing a little rewriting from time to time and directing all of the scripts and the art.

CF: For a long time Archie never gave credit to it's creators.

Goldwater: Primarily it was because it was a caricature that twelve different artists drew from time to time. It would be difficult for the readers to know which artist was which so we just never...

CF: Certainly you could normally spot a Bob Bolling or a Bob Montana or one of the better artists.

Goldwater: Some very astute people can tell the difference between say, Bob Bolling's art or Dan DeCarlo's art or Stan Goldberg's art or some of the other people that have worked for us in the past.

CF: On the writing side it seems to be a lot more difficult. There seems to be something of a house look to it.

Goldwater: Most of the writers started out with us as artists. They did such good story board writing along with the art that they became exclusively writers as we increased our production on the Archie properties. Originally we were MLJ Magazines, publishing a lot of the original super-heroes in the late thirties and the early forties. As the Archie popularity increased, we slowly phased out our super-hero population.

CF: He started as a back-up feature in **Pep Comics** I believe.

Goldwater: That's correct. Then it became the lead feature and then it got it's own title, Archie.

CF: It became the company.

Goldwater: It became the company, right. We tried to get back into the super-hero business in the sixties and the seventies, but we weren't particularly successful I think primarily because at that time we didn't have as good a distribution on our super-hero titles as we had on the Archies.

CF: Who was distributing the Archies at that time?

Goldwater: Right now Fawcett, CBS is distributing the Archie books through the independant wholesalers.

CF: Your primary distribution is still through the independent wholesalers, isn't it?

Goldwater: Primary distribution is through the independant wholesalers on the Archie books, whether they be the standard-sized, 32-page books or the digest books that we publish.

CF: I heard that the digest books were doing extremely well.

Goldwater: That's correct. The digest books are doing very well; in particular they have found a home in super-

markets and convenience stores and that's where most people shop for the comic books.

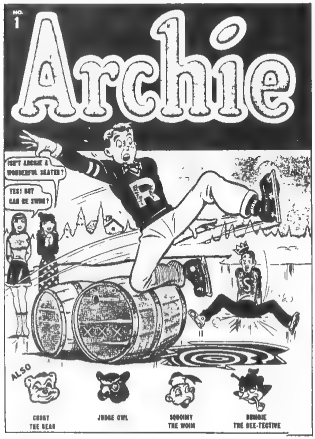
CF: It seems that, unlike your own Red Circle and certainly unlike Marvel or DC, Archie is really dependant on a completely different form of distribution than the direct market sources. I don't think very many Archies actually sell through the direct market.

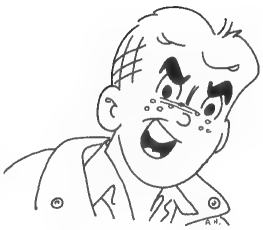
Goldwater: Archies do not sell very many through the direct market. That's primarily because we do have an obligation through Fawcet CBS to sell our magazines through the wholesalers.

CF: Which is probably just as well, because I don't think the direct market wholesalers would be able to move that many. The outlets they deal with are sort of super-hero crazy.

Goldwater: That's correct. But they are getting a little bit concerned because there is an overwhelming supply of super-hero material and science-fiction material going into the direct market and there's nothing for the young readers. I have spoken to many of the direct market jobbers and they are concerned with this problem. There is no competition in that direct market area to Archie. They do not have enough humor material going into the direct market and eventually the humor material will begin to catch on in the direct market and there's really no product.

CF: Other than DC's **Captain Carrot** which is super-hero based or Pacific's **Groo** which is really sword-and-sorcery based.





Goldwater: Right. There's no teenage material whatso-ever, there's very little pre-teen material going into the direct market...

CF: There isn't any, is there?

Goldwater: Well, using Richie Rich as an example.

CF: That doesn't sell to the direct market.

Goldwater: No. They're temporarily suspending publication until they straighten out some problems that they have.

CF: Even when they are publishing, they don't deal with direct market distributors.

Goldwater: Correct. They do not.

CF: So there's nothing of that nature. Even when Walt Disney comics were publishing, they weren't going into the direct market either.

CF: They were selling them to the direct market distributors, but not in big numbers. Is that because the retail customer is basically a fan who grew up on super-hero comics and it's an older group on the whole then the cross section you get at a super-market?

Goldwater: What I think is happening in the direct market is that primarily the slightly older reader who has, I suppose, some kind of substantial allowance, is purchasing these comic magazines. Most of them range from 60 cents to $2.50. They've been collecting them and putting them in plastic bags and putting them away and hoping they appreciate and they have been through the years. I think a lot of kids have gotten into comic books and away from collecting stamps and coins which really nobody understands and they don't have the value of being able to read from time to time. They really don't have much of a history where comic books have a marvelous history going back into the late thirties.

CF: Do you think part of the problem is that the younger segment of the population age-wise kept getting trimmed off with the price increases of the comic books?

Goldwater: No, I don't believe so. I think everybody has

Archie's Girls
Betty and Veronica
VERONICA, I NEVER SAID YOU HAD A BIG MOUTH!
THEN WHY AM I THE ONLY ONE YOU ASKED TO BOB FOR PUMPKINS, BETTY?
Dan DeCarlo

adjusted to price increases no matter what the product is. I think the fact that you can buy a comic book today for 60 cents and in a few months the comic will be worth over a dollar and in a few years, if it's a special issue, may be worth ten dollars or a hundred dollars or...it's unlimited.

CF: Well that's only if they're buying it for the enhanced value as opposed to buying it to read it.

Goldwater: Yes, I think most of the people who are buying from the direct market, especially with the mail that we're getting, believe that the comics they buy will appreciate and that's one of the reasons that they're buying them. Along with all the materials that they have to collect them: plastic bags and special boxes that are acid free so that the comics will not deteriorate.

CF: Now Archie comics, at least the ones published in more recent years, don't tend to increase in value that way.

Goldwater: The Archies do not increase in value anywhere near as rapidly as the super-hero material does, but I think in the future that will change.

CF: Isn't Archie aimed at a different age than that collector that we're talking about?

Goldwater: We sell more to a pre-teen reader and we sell more to a female reader than I think the super-hero magazines sell to. I think one thing that the direct market business is over-looking is — or they're trying to find out how to sell comic magazines like the Archie line to potential girl readers who are out there who are buying our books on the newsstand.

CF: I think part of the problem on the retailer end is that the retailer is not really certain how to make that person part of their own market. As a result he doesn't even order Archies when they are made available from the distributor. Then, because they don't have those books in the store, they don't tend to attract that reader. It's kind of a vicious circle. Why do you think that Archie tentends to draw more of a female audience than a male audience as do the other comics?

Goldwater: I think the basic conception of Archie is that it's a romance/humor comic book. Outside of some paperback stories stories that I see published from time to time by some of the major publishing companies, there is very little material for the girls to read that is of the romance variety. The girls will either identify with Betty Cooper or Veronica Lodge. They all want to start dating and they want to learn about it in the Archie comic books. We're also very fashion oriented. The girls convey being very concerned about their appearance and what they wear; they send us tons of mail about fashions that they would like to see the girls, Betty and Veronica, wear.

CF: On the whole your artists seem to have a better understanding of what I guess you would call "body language" than they do at most comics companies. Is that a deliberate effort there at Archie?

Goldwater: I believe it is a deliberate effort, yes. There's no question about it. I think our artists have evolved in the drawing of the Archie characters or the other teen-age characters that we have – because our characters are not heroic, they can't fly, the action is limited in those areas – they've evolved into doing a lot of different things, as you mentioned, with body language.

CF: I guess this is part of the problem I've been told of by several artist of the super-hero variety, that it's fairly easy to make a visually exciting looking fight scene, but it's much more difficult to make an interesting looking sleeping scene or eating scene or talking scene, and that's all you really have to work with.

Goldwater: When the super-heroes stop fighting villains and are just walking around talking to each other, it appears to be boring. The action sequences are what most of the readers are looking for. They still haven't figured out how to handle the non-action sequences. I think that will eventually evolve. I think the super-heroes are beginning to get a lot more personality than they used to have in the past.

CF: Have you read any of the Bruce Jones' Ka-Zar stories? A lot of people have compared the structure of that book to Archie comics.

Goldwater: I don't believe I have. What is the name of the character again?

CF: Ka-Zar, by Bruce Jones.

Goldwater: Ka-Zar? I know Bruce Jones. I talked to him the other day. He had done some artwork for us on the old Red Circle line of comics. I just sent him some of his artwork back. I'll get in touch with him and I'll look into that. I there is a comparison made, it's very interesting and I'm happy.

CF: Bruce is actually writing more than drawing now.

Goldwater: I think he's doing some material for Pacific Comics.

CF: Yes, he is. Another person I imagine you have some interest in is the editor of the Spiderman comics now, Tom Defalco.

Goldwater: Tom is an old friend of mine. Tom worked for Archie for, I suppose, close to ten years before he went over to Marvel. I think he was a comic book fan starting out. He came over to us and got a job in our art department, but I think his primary interest was in the super-hero characters. He had been proding us for several years to get back into the super-hero business with our properties and then he was offered a job with Marvel and took it. He's been very successful as the editor of Spiderman.

CF: He seems to be making a very strenuous effort to get his writers to incorporate more and more personality into the characters in the books.

Goldwater: I think that's partially part of the Archie influence that he had here. We were so concerned with personality. It was just a natural trend for him to try to get that into his super-hero comics. It makes sense.

CF: Getting back to the business end for a moment, we had heard stories that Archie had cut back the titles to bimonthly and was going to trim back further and further.

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Yet Rich Buckler mentioned to me yesterday that in fact the opposite was going to be happening.

Goldwater: Yes, as a matter of fact it probably will. Because of the economy we did cut back some of our frequency of issues. We now publish approximately 70 thirty-two page, standard-size Archie comics a year. We publish approximately 40 digest issues per year. The sales have been improving lately so there must be some improvement in the economy. I can't, quite frankly, see that it's improving that rapidly, but our sales seem to be doing fairly well. I think in the near future, probably this summer, we will be increasing our production again.

CF: Are there any plans specifically for what those increases would be?

Goldwater: Not at this particular time. We're not sure whether we want to bring out brand new titles with the Archie characters or just increase the frequency of our regularly published magazines. We're going to sit down and have some strategy sessions in the next couple of months.

CF: Have Archie's sales increased because there's now a vacuum on the newstand?

Goldwater: Yes, I believe so. I think more and more publishers are going into the direct market. I think the fact that now Harvey Comics is not publishing is helping the regular Archie comics on the newstands. We're also working very closely with our distributor who is working very closely with the whole-salers to make sure that all the magazines get distributed.

CF: So that you don't run into the killer returns.

Goldwater: Exactly. And I think that everybody is trying to help out because, quite frankly, most of the whole salers like the Archie products.

CF: So you are not experiencing the problem that almost all of the comic companies have had in the past and that is that since they deal with a 60 cent item, the whole-

salers don't seem terribly concerned. You're titles are more generic so that you don't have the specific title control problem that they would.

Goldwater: No, and I think also the fact that we have dollar digest magazines and we also have a double digest comics magazine that sells for a dollar ninety-five is helping the whole-saler.

CF: I can see where that would help in the distribution of the digest, but not necessarily in the comic.

Goldwater: Well, I think it's really a package. The Archies go out as digests and as regular 32-page comics and they get displayed on the spinner racks or in supermarkets.

CF: Not always. I've seen a number of outlets which have the digests but not the comics.

Goldwater: I wish you'd let me know and we'll get after them.

CF: I've seen a number of places that take the digest and put it into their regular magazine racks where they keep the **Reader's Digest** and things like that or they put it with the **Mads**...

Goldwater: I'm very happy to hear that.

CF: They're not with the comics. Sometimes there's no comics at all.

Goldwater: Well I think what's happening too is that some outlets did drop comics and they put in video machines, Pac Man or whatever some of the other ones are called. I think some of the novelty is wearing off these games and I think kids are drifting back into purchesing comics.

CF: Take a look at some of the arcades. I work in an office that is three doors from a video arcade and that place is always packed. There are waiting lines on some of the machines. So if that's happening, it's not happening down here in florida yet. What do you thing will happen over-all with the humor comic? Do you thing it will always be a super-market item?

Goldwater: I think the humor market is going to be around in the future as probably most comic books will. I think the only comic books that will not be successful are the ones that are poorly written and drawn. Any comic magazine that has good writing and good art and has an appeal to a portion of the readership will be successful.

CF: Why do you think that Marvel and DC seem to be out of it? [Humor] Each time they get back into it they immediately get back out of it again.

Goldwater: That's a good question. I certainly wouldn't want to reveal our secret to successful publishing. I know that from time to time they have tried to get into the super-hero comic and they've been successful and they tried to get into – for instance, when Marvel was publishing Millie the Model and some other teen-age characters, that was probably their bread and butter; today it's Spiderman.

CF: It seems that for the last 20 years, every time that Archie has tried to do super-heroes it has been unsuccessful and every time that Marvel and DC have tried to do humor comics, it's been equally unsuccessful. Marvel certainly, with people like Hank Ketcham and the Smurfs, have had reasonable properties.

Goldwater: I don't know why they haven't been successful. I suppose there's nobody who can answer that particular question except the accountants in the companies.

CF: Do you view the humor comics and the super-hero comics as inherantly different types of marketing? I notice that your super-hero line is entirely through the direct market.

Goldwater: That's correct. It's entirely for the direct market because those are the areas where most of the sales are comic from in the super-hero business. As far as the teen-age sales go, most of the sales are comig from the whole-salers distribution to the mom-and-pop's stores or the super-markets or convenience stores.

CF: Do you think they will eventually come together?

Goldwater: I don't think it depends so much on the direct market but on the retailer. What is the retailer going to do? Is he going to open up more shops? Is he going to make the books available to the pre-teenager as

well as the teenager? Is he going to advertise that he has the Archie books? We're trying to do that in a lot of the publications that are for the direct market industry to let the readers know that the Archie comics can be made available.

CF: Where have you advertised?

Goldwater: We're advertising mostly Red Circle right now, but we're beginning to advertise the Archie line even though we don't sell very many comics into the direct market. We want the direct market to know that the Archie comic books are available.

CF: To increase the awareness?

Goldwater: Exactly. We want to increase the consciousness and I think that the direct market jobbers are beginning to address that problem. They haven't made the book stores aware that the Archie product is available and that there's definately a readership for it. Then it's up to the stores to go out and tet the readers to come in and know that they can pick up any comic magazine in the store.

CF: I think part of the problem that the distributors have had is that retailers will fill out their order forms and decide what they want themselves, without that much imput from the distributor except in the way of promotional material. They skip the Archie page and skip the Whitman page that used to appear and just order the super-heroes. Until that barrier is broken, it's going to be very difficult.

Goldwater: What I think that the publisher has to do is supply the direct market jobber with the material to send to his accounts, who are of course the retail stores, and the more material the publisher will send to the jobber, the more material the stores will get.

CF: I think another problem akin to that is the problem that DC has in the direct market with their western titles. It's almost as if the dealer is interested in the super-hero genre and that's it. I guess a little bit of science-fiction and space fantasy, but of such a nature that it's almost super-heroic as well. One comic shop here has kept a seperate spinner with just humor comics on it that is kept near the door. They've done very well with that. It doesn't move the way X-Men does, but...

Goldwater: Well, not too many products do.

CF: They have found, oddly enough, and I'm not sure of the reason, that when they take the humor comic books out of the comic rack and give them their own spinner, they sell better than when they leave them in the magazine racks with the other comics.

Goldwater: That's very interesting. I will pass that along to our distributor, Fawcett.

CF: I don't know if that would work elsewhere or if it works simply because it's a comic book outlet as opposed to a super-market or something of this nature. It's definite. They put it in it's own rack and keep it near the door and what they're finding is that when people come in to buy the super-hero comics 30-40% of the time they have a little sister or a little daughter or little something along with them and that's who's picking them up.

Goldwater: That's exactly what I've heard. The jobbers that have been gathering a lot of information find that when a brother will walk in looking for his super-hero material that came in that week he may come in with his sister and if the teen-age material isn't there, if the humor material isn't there, there is quite frankly nothing for his sister to buy. But if it's displayed, then it will sell.

CF: I think the reason that it might work better keeping it seperate is that, and this is my theory, she doesn't go over to the comic rack and look with him. But, if she's standing there and it's by the door and it's just this great big rack of them, it stares her right in the face. So she buys it. If it's not there she doesn't buy it.

FORGOTTEN SUPERHEROES

Murray R. Ward

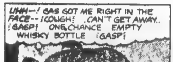
(Herewith begins a new series of articles. The theme, for better or worse, is the "forgotten" super-hero — the costumed comics character whose book or series has ceased to be published and whose name no longer comes immediately to mind when fans think of the principal characters of a certain comics company.

The operative definition of a "forgotten" hero has necessarily undergone some reinterpretation since publisher Hal Schuster suggested the idea for this series to me. As everyone knows, old Marvel characters are never forgotten, not really; they don't die, they just turn up in other characters' books after a while. In recent years, DC has taken a cue from Marvel and has let very few of even their most obscure characters fade completely into oblivion. It's up to the individual reader and the longevity of his stay in comics fandom just how "forgotten" some of these characters really are. Our new, wider definition of the forgotten super-hero includes any character who once had his own title or strip and currently does not, including even some characters who never had their own strip but may have someday in the future.)

We open our series with one of DC's weirdest and most off-beat super-characters, who may no longer be quite so forgotten by the time this article sees print, as he is slated to begin a new series of adventures [written by Carl Gafford and drawn by British "Doctor Who" artist Dave Gibbons] as a back-up feature in **The Flash**. Thus, once again, comics fandom must...Beware...the Creeper!

To properly explain the genesis of the Creeper, a bit of scene-setting is necessary.

The year is 1968. A year and a half earlier, Steve Ditko, celebrated as the artist who visually created Marvel's Spider-Man and Dr. Strange, had left that company and returned to his former employer, Charlton, where he drew Captain



Atom, the Question, and the new Blue Beetle. In '67, Charlton's fledgling super-hero line folded with the death of the "camp" craze, and its editor, Dick Giordano, migrated to DC, bringing most of his staff with him. Said staff included Jim Aparo, Steve Skeates, Frank McLaughlin, and others...among them, Steve Ditko. Now, as 1968 opens, Marvel and DC rush new titles into production to take up the newsstand space vacated by the demise of many second-string super-hero producers [i.e., virtually every comics publisher other than themselves] who were rapidly becoming a part of comics history. Marvel takes the opportunity to break the heroes sharing their "split-format" titles, such as **Strange Tales**, **Tales to Astonish**, and **Tales of Suspense**, out into books of their own. **Nick Fury**, **Dr. Strange**, **Sub-Mariner**, **Hulk**, **Iron Man**, and **Captain America** finally receive their own books. DC, meanwhile, begins to issue a rapid-fire series of new titles featuring new and untried characters and concepts, filtered for the most part through their traditional try-out title, **Showcase**. Many of these headline the work of the Giordano group of former Charlton staffers. Unfortunately, after the boom of '66-'67, comics sales are in a slump, and the new titles uniformly die out within a year of their release [even at Marvel, many of the new books, even those featuring established heroes, do not last past 1969]. For a brief moment, though, DC generates fannish excitement with such books as **Anthro**, **Batlash**, **Secret Six**, **Captain Action**, **The Hawk and The Dove**... and **Beware The Creeper**. The latter two are the creations of Ditko.

Steve Ditko is perhaps unique among comics professionals. He is a man of mystery, who refuses to give interviews, attend conventions, or otherwise make himself available to his public, despite the unrelenting efforts of fans and his employers to get him to do so. "My work speaks for me," he will say repeatedly, when cornered for a comment. When Marvel offered photos of their staff as a feature in the **1964 Marvel Tales Annual**, Ditko's was noticeably absent. When the company inaugurated its own fan club, the late lamented M.M.M.S., one of whose membership gifts was a recording of the voices of Stan Lee and his cohorts, Ditko was said to have "leaped out the window" in the manner of his co-creation, Spider-Man, rather than face the microphone. When Ditko left Marvel, his later employers had as little success in turning him into a visible celebrity. And yet, his fans were an extremely vocal and loyal lot. They followed the unique stylist from company to company in search of more strips featuring heroes who fired strange rays from their hands, postured peculiarly, and frightened evildoers with their bizarre appearances in a way that Batman had never imagined possible.

Enter, the Creeper. He made his bow in **Showcase #73**, and like most of the new DC heroes featured therein at the time, immediately made the jump to his own series, which lasted six issues. The Creeper, whose appearance and modus operandi, combined with Ditko's unmistakeable art style, fairly begged for comparison with Spider-Man, was actually Spidey turned sidewise, conceptually speaking. The brash, wise-cracking, daring, devil-may-care Spider-Man was actually shy, bookish, socially inept high-schooler/collegian Peter Parker, whose personal problems, amplified by his secret hero status, took up at least half of each issue of his comic. With the Creeper, however, it was the character's civilian identity who was the brash, wise-cracking, colorful character...while the super-hero was even **more** off-beat and colorful.

In **Showcase #73**, Jack Ryder [note the surname, and compare with that of Peter Parker; while Parker "parks"—sits still and lets Spider-Man do the dirty work—Ryder "rides" along with the action, taking an equal part in solving cases with his other identity; Marvel would use a similar play on names years later with Nova, alias Richard Rider, a character also intended to somewhat resemble Spidey,] who was a talk-show host for WHAM-TV in an unspecified big city...for about three panels, before he got himself fired. Ryder's unabashed and abrasive with

and his penchant for speaking his mind under any and all circumstances, apparently characteristics that had gotten him in trouble more than once previously, cost him his position. He insulted an interview guest, a ridiculously wimpy pacifist named Dr. Wetley, who was a personal friend of his sponsor. [The characterization of Wetley, who pops up throughout the origin tale with his inane comments such as his being upset by the garish colors of costumes at a masquerade party...even **before** he sees the **Creeper**'s costume, is rather strange, given that Ditko was simultaneously producing a book one of whose heroes was a pacifist: **The Hawk and The Dove**.] Not everyone is put off by Ryder's acerbic utterances, however, and network security chief Bill Brane immediately offers Jack a position as a troubleshooter. In this capacity, he will meet the rest of the book's cast, who sport such equally-descriptive names as Vera Sweet and Rip Cord, and will become that most bizarre of crime-crushers, the Creeper.

A word about the supporting cast and situations in the Creeper series is in order, before we get to our hero's origin. To anyone familiar with the Ditko repertoire of characters, who tend to turn up using different names in virtually everything he lays pencil to, the Creeper strip is a bonanza of nostalgia. Jack Ryder, aside from resembling the civilian selves of such other Ditko heroes as the Blue Beetle, the Question, and Shade the Changing Man [and even a plastic disguise worn by NoMan in a Ditko-drawn Tower Comics tory], looks very much as an adult Pete Parker might, under Ditko's pen. Bill Brane is Norman [Green Goblin] Osborn with black hair; Vera Sweet [who isn't sweet at all, but instead engages in a running duel of insults with Ryder] is the station's "weather girl" and is probably ex-Spidey-girlfriend Liz Allen grown up. The story in the Creeper's first issue involves the mysterious Terror, a costumed crime-boss who schemes to take over all the mobs a la Spidey's Big Man and Crime-Master and who employs similar tactics to those of the Crime-Master, whose two-part debut in **Spider-Man** was plotted by Ditko. [The scene with all the top mobsters in a summit meeting deciding that the Terror "knows too much about their operations" and therefore "must be one of them" is identical almost word-for-word with a scene in **Spider-Man #26**.] Finally, the recurring villain in **Creeper #2-6**, Proteus, is a master of disguise who could secretly be any member of the cast [a recurring device in Ditko's strips; e.g., the Big Man, the Crime-Master, and above all, the Green Goblin]. Proteus' putty-like face resembles the mask of Spidey-villain disguise-master, the Chameleon.

Meanwhile, back at the origin story, Jack Ryder attends the aforementioned masquerade party looking for leads to the whereabouts

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of a kidnapped scientist taken from his lab by local hoods working in cahoots with communist agents (another oddity: the use of commie villains was a rarity in '68). Ryder, whose life is his work, whatever his work happens to be at the moment (unlike Peter Parker, Ryder and most other Ditko heroes have virtually no private life outside their work and super-heroing), thinks nothing of endangering his life to crash the suspect festivities, but he lacks a costume and an invitation. Visiting a nearby costume-shop, he chances on a box of "odds-and-ends" which he purchases and combines to create an outfit which, if nothing else, disguises the fact that he is really Jack Ryder. His skin dyed yellow from head to toe by makeup [Ryder obviously has yet to see the movie "Goldfinger"], he dons green-striped trunks and crimson boots and gloves, plus an emerald fright-wig, and tops it all off by slinging a red sheepskin rug about his neck as a "cape" of sorts. The result looks nothing like anything anybody is likely ever to have seen before, even in a comic-book!

Still lacking an invitation, the costumed troubleshooter solves his problem by entering through an unguarded window. He is soon spotted as an intruder, even as he locates the missing scientist, Dr. Yatz. Stabbed in the abdomen and sealed in an inescapable hidden room with the captive Yatz, Ryder becomes the beneficiary of the savant's twin discoveries. A special serum gives him extra strength, stamina, and agility [sort of a variant on Capt. America's super-soldier formula] and almost instantly heals his wound, while an electronic device implanted in the wound gives him the ability to make his outlandish outfit become invisible and intangible instantaneously. Activated by a second control, which Ryder later begins to wear taped to his wrist under his watch, the device, in effect, creates a Billy Batson/Capt. Marvel-like transormation ability from Jack Ryder to the Creeper and back again. The scientist reveals that the Reds want to use the device to enable armed troops to invade unsuspecting cities disguised as tourists; one can only wonder what use the, apparently horrified Yatz planned for the invention. We'll never know because in the next few moments the badguys burst in. Like Capt. America's Dr. Reinstein and Iron Man's Prof. Yinsen before him, Doc Yatz is fatally shot and passes out of our story, having done his job in giving the hero his powers.

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"BUT THE POWER I NOW HAD DID HELP ME IN SMASHING DEVILIN'S OPERATION!
"AFTER I CAPTURED HIM, THE POLICE AND COURTS TOOK OVER AND DEVILIN WAS SENT TO PRISON!
"I LEARNED LATER THAT MY WOUND HAD COMPLETELY HEALED--WITH ONE NOTABLE EXCEPTION!
"USING THE ACTIVATOR, I COULD STILL MAKE MY WEIRD COSTUME REAPPEAR...
"...BUT THE DEVICE MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE THE MAKE-UP OR THE COSTUME!
"I HAD USED THEATRICS, WEIRD TOYS, AND A CHILLING LAUGH TO SHAKE UP DEVILIN AND HIS GANG OF THUGS! THE MAGIC BUT WORKED SO WELL--THAT THEY NAMED ME--THE CREEPER!*
* "THE ORIGIN OF THE CREEPER" FIRST APPEARED IN SHOWCASE #73. --JCH
"I GOT A CHARGE OUT OF THE PLAY-ACTING, AND A BIGGER ONE OUT OF THE THUGS' REACTIONS TO ME AS THE CREEPER. I DECIDED TO CONTINUE THE FUN!"
NOW DEVILIN'S FREE! AND BEATING UP BRUISER JUST ISN'T SOMETHING A REFORMED CRIMINAL WOULD DO! I DON'T KNOW WHAT DEVILIN'S UP TO--BUT I'LL FIND OUT AND STOP HIM COLD!
TM & © 1985 DC Comics

Ryder's bizarre appearance seems to rattle the attacking hoods when he plays into them to avenge his benefactor. He instantly hits on the scheme of adding a cackling laugh, a weird hunching gait, and a melodramatic, "spooky", speech pattern to the "effect" to frighten his adversaries even more, and throw off their aim (aside our hero may be, but he knows he's not bulletproof). Soon the fight spreads outside the house, with our wildly leaping protagonist belting thugs right and left...until, in his overexuberance, he accidentally belts a cop, who has shown up to investigate the disturbance. Changing back to Jack Ryder at the press of his new activator, our hero avoids arrest, but the damage is done. "That Creeper character", as the police dub him, is soon wanted by the law **and** by the under world, in the mode of the Green Hornet. Security boss Brane also thinks the costumed crusader is suspicious, when he shows up in response to Ryder's call, but wonders "why they call him the Creeper". "Because he creeps", quips Ryder, "Why else?"

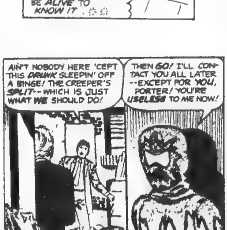
So begins the career of the Creeper in a story in which Don Segall contributes. The remainder of the series would be written in similar fashion by Denny O'Neil, then in the process of emerging from his "Sergius O'Shaughnessy" pseudonym. After unmasking the aforementioned Terror in #1, and while taking time out for an adventure on a mysterious island being used as a gang hideout in #3, the Creeper would devote the remainder of his stint in his own title to battling his arch-foe (indeed, his **only** recurring foe), the many-faced Proteus. In the donouement, which also ended the series, Proteus would learn the Creeper's true identity and be revealed in turn as his roommate, Rip Torn. In similar fashion, the Green Goblin would learn Spidey's identity (after Ditko's departure from Marvel) and eventually (the second Goblin) would become the hero's roomie, in a strange and coincidental case of the earlier Ditko hero borrowing from the latter. Not only that, but although pronounced dead in the closing panels of **Creeper #6**, Proteus (or perhaps an unrevealed imitator) would turn up alive and well a decade later in the pages of **Justice League**, just as the Goblin, though deceased, would continue to "return" in **Spider-Man**.

Meanwhile, the powers-that-be at DC were trying to stop the Creeper, as well as the other newly-created characters of that same era, from losing his magazine. They gave him a guest-appearance teaming him up with Batman in **The Brave and The Bold**. Jack Ryder redonned his TV celebrity hat to warn Gotham City of a new super-criminal called Hellgrammite, whom the Creeper had to battle while simultaneously trying to prove his innocence to Batman. (By this time, the Creeper was wanted for slightly more serious charges than suspicions of decking an officer of the law; in an early issue, Proteus, disguised as the hero, had blown up a WHAM-TV studio and killed an announcer, and the Creeper had never been entirely cleared of involvement.) Then the Creeper turned up in **Justice League** when Batman, rethinking the events of **The Brave and the Bold** story, delegated his fellow JLA members to check out Creeper and decide if he were actually a felon or merely a slightly wacky new super-hero. After a case of mistaken identity involved Creeper and JLA stalwarts with cheap crooks, invading aliens, and an immature would-be

young super-doer named Mind-Grabber Kic, the World's Greatest Super-Heroes decided in our protagonist's favor. Both of these outside appearances were scheduled too late to save the Creeper's own book. Besides, an ailing Steve Ditko was growing unable to meet his deadlines and was forced to turn over the cover of the final issue, as well as covers and interiors on **Hawk and Dove**, to Gil Kane.

The Creeper did gain two things from his guest-appearances, though: first, his acquaintanceship with Batman would serve him in good stead when his revival was eventually attempted, as would be the case for many other cancelled DC heroes who managed to keep their names before the public eye by appearing in **Brave and Bold** with the Caped Crusader; and second, Bob Haney, seemingly unaware that while Jack Ryder spoke a colorful tough-guy patois, the Creeper deliberately mimicked the speech pattern of the Spectre, gave him dialogue that made him sound like a maniac Spider-Man, rather than a slightly loony Thor. In his later appearances, scripters tended to forget which way the Creeper was supposed to speak, and why. Curiously, they always remembered his laugh, which was lettered into panels seperate from the hero's spoken dialogue, in an unending series of "Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha" 's that often took up the entire background of an action scene. One often wondered how the Creeper could laugh and talk at the same time, or whether he had an accomplice broadcasting a laughtrack while he duked it out with the villains. The laugh did result in two memorable comedic moments. In the origin story, after several uninterrupted panels of "Ha Ha Ha" 's, Ryder thinks to himself, "One more Ha and I'm gonna have a sore throat!" And on meeting the Creeper for the first time, Batman asks, "Are you sure you're not related to the Joker?"

Time went by and the Creeper went into comics limbo. In the interim, your humble author, then in the latter years of high school, penned [for my own amusement] a **Justice League** story in which the Creeper returned.


AIN'T NOBODY HERE 'CEPT THIS ARKHAM SLEEPIN' OFF A BINGE! THE CREEPER'S SPLIT-- WHICH IS JUST WHAT WE SHOULD DO!
THEN GO! I'LL CONTACT YOU ALL LATER --EXCEPT FOR YOU, PORTER! YOU'RE USELESS TO ME NOW!
NO! I PLANTED THE DEVICES LIKE YOU SAID-- AHHHHHH!!

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It seemed that, in my scenario, the activator had malfunctioned, trapping the Creeper in his costumed identity, and he sought the aid of his old buddy Batman to end his dilemma, only to find that Batman had apparently turned criminal and was looting Gotham City. The Creeper then sought out Batman's JLA comrades for help, but coundn't find them because they had just moved from their cave Secret Santuary to their new satellite HQ. Not only that, but the remaining Justice League members [except Green Lantern, Green Arrow, and Black Canary, who were busy with events in a simultaneous issue of **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** -- ah, continuity!] had also turned to crime in their various home cities. Eventually, the Creeper helped the League turn the tables on Dr. Destiny, who had used his dream-machines to take control of the superheroes' minds while they slept [yup, they were committing crimes in their sleep!], and they in turn helped him change back to Jack Ryder. None of this ever "really" happened, of course, because I never submitted my story and thus it was never considered for publication [why I didn't send it in, I have forgotten]. I mention it here only to illustrate that I must have been one of several recipients of a good idea whose time had not yet come, because when the Creeper **did** return, a couple of the same plot elements popped up with him.

In **Detective #418**, Denny O'Neil brough back the Creeper as an adversary for Batmen. Just as in my story, Creeper was stuck as Creeper and couldn't switch back, and to top it off, he was slowly going insane. He was being used by Dr. Ishmael Yatz, the crooked son of the original Doc Yatz who gave him his powers, to commit crimes under the guise of collecting ingredients for a cure. In the end, the evil Yatz, who had managed to duplicate the secret serum and give **Himself** Creeper-like powers, faced his comeuppance, and the Creeper changed back to Ryder, revealing his identity to Batman in the process [but that was a small price to pay for sanity].

Then, in **Detective #447**, the

tables were turned, as Len Wein's "Bat-Murderer" series had the Batman framed for the death of an old enemy, and the Creeper trying to bring him in. After a slugfest, Batman convinced the Creeper of his innocence and enlisted his aid in bringing the real culprits to justice. Jack Ryder showed up as himself, passing vital information to a disguised Caped Crusader in issue #448. [So what if the villain wasn't Dr. Destiny?]

In the late 70s, the Creeper popped up here, there, and everywhere, seemingly at random, as one or another of the new generation of comics writers, most of whom remembered the hero fondly from his original run, attempted to revive him. Perhaps inspired by Batman's earlier jest, he callenged the Crown Prince of Crime to combat, only to serve briefly as his brainwashed accomplice, in **Joker #3**. **First Issue Special #7** saw the Creeper drawn by Ditko again in a one-shot try-out, after which he was teamed with Wildcat in **Super-Team Family #2**. He was given a try-out series as a back-up to Aquaman in **Adventure Comics #445 - 447**, a three-part story which ended with a possible girlfriend of Jack Ryder learning the Creeper's secret identity. [Apparently, nobody but the writer liked this idea much, and she was never heard of again.] Jack Ryder turned up in mufti again as a newscaster in **Teen Titans #46** [by this time, he was back in front of the cameras full-time, eventually working for the WHAM affiliate in Gotham City]. Then the Creeper, still thought by at least some people to be a villain, was recruited by the Secret Society of Super-Villains in their 9th and 10th issues. He tried to turn the table on the aggregation of JLA enemies while pretending to help them, which led to an unintended conflict with Kid Flash and Captain Comet. He also showed up, along with half the DC pantheon of heroes in **Showcase #100**. At this point, DC reacquired the services of Steve Ditko, and the Creeper got his artist/creator back when he took another shot at the back-up series route as one of the regular stars of **World's Finest** in issues #249 - 255. When Ditko left the company again the strip was dropped. During and after this period, the Creeper helped out Batman, in **Brave and Bold #143** and **118**.

Which brings us up to the present, and the impending re-emergence of the "World's Weirdest Hero" as the star of his own strip in **Flash**. Will Jack Ryder be a newsman, a celebrity interviewer, or a troubleshooter in this incarnation? Will he finally get a supporting cast for the first time since his own title folded? Will DC remember the Creeper's proper speech pattern, and stick to it? Will our rug-wearing rogue still be wanted by the law, as well as by the underworld? Will she finally go mad? Will Jack stock up on Scotch products to keep the activator securely taped to his wrist? By the time this sees print many of these questions may have been answered. We'll all have to read **Flash** and find out.

DC seems a lot stonger a contender in the comic-book marketplace these days than the last few times the Creeper reared his tousled head, and back-up strips in the 80s seem to stand a decent chance of achieving their own titles again. Here's wishing the Creeper all the luck in the world in his latest shot at the big time. I for one hope he makes it, and is never a "Forgotten" super-hero again.

The world can always use another Spider-Man.

[Errr...that was a joke, Jack... Jack?...]

CHRONOLOGY OF THE CREEPER'S APPEARANCES

Showcase #73 [origin]
Beware the Creeper #1-6 [series]
The Brave and The Bold #80 [with Batman]
Justice League of America #70 [with Justice League]
Detective #418 [with Batman]

Detective #448 [as Jack Ryder, with Batman]
Joker #3 [vs. Joker]
First Issue Special #7 [solo tryout]
Super-Team Family #2 [with Wildcat]
Adventure #445-447 [series]
Teen Titans #46 [as Jack Ryder]
Secret Society of Super-Villains #9-10 [with SSOSV, Capt. Comet, and Kid Flash]
Showcase #100 [with everybody]
World's Finest #249-255 [series]
The Brave and The Bold #148 [with Batman]
The Brave and The Bold #178 [with Batman]
Flash #318-? [series]

THE MAN WHO RE-CREATED THE BRITISH COMICS INDUSTRY.

by Brian M. Clarke

The British comics industry is an insular animal not often seen outside of its natural habitat. It's humor and adventure strips are placed firmly on the stage of a class-ridden society in which rewards are simple [a big meal, a football ticket, or an Ice Cream), and it's punish-ment harsh [a slipper smacked across the behind]. Drugs, murder, rape and politics are hidden [ignored?] beneath a veneer of safe urban life.

The industry has been quick to adopt popular "house-styles" in an effort to maximize the comics appeal. The majority of British comics are bought by parents, and parents tend to buy what-ever is familiar from their own child-hood. Very few British artists have been elevated to the position of ori-ginating a "house-style"; the most prominent being Leo Baxendale.

Baxendale was born in 1931. By 1933 he was drawing on walls, newspapers, and books. In a rare case of parental understanding, his parents didn't chastise the young artist, but instead offered him crayons and encourage-ment.

Throughout his career Baxendale has never tried to produce 'realistic' art-work, but has always preferred car-tooning. He admits that his main weak-ness is that he has never sketched from real life, and has a bad retentive memory for detail. Instead of attending Art School, the young Bax [as he is known to his friends] concentrated on cartoons and was soon selling to his local paper.

It wasn't until he was 22 that the idea of drawing comic strips entered his head. His younger brother was reading a copy of the ever popular British comic **Beano**. Bax happened to notice a fea-ture called "Dennis the Menace" [No relation to the Hank Ketcham version] and was impressed with the creative-ness of David Law's artwork. For Bax the main attraction of the strip was that it's central character was not only a rebel - but a present day rebel, making the concept a starkly original one in the early 50's. Censorship had tended to keep bad 'role models' out of the hands of children, presenting whole-some characters full of human kin-dness.

Inspired by the material, Baxendale posted a bungle of cartoon cuttings from the local paper to the **Beano** office.

Every Thursday ★ ★ THE BEANO December 26, 1970
DENNIS THE MENACE
THIS IS HUNGRY WORK, ISN'T IT?
GNASH!
HOME, GNASHER! SOON BE THE TIME FOR THE CHRISTMAS FEED!
GNASH! SLURP!
HOW DO YOU LIKE THE TURKEY, DENNIS? I'M JUST GOING TO POP IT IN THE OVEN WHILE MUM CLEANS UP
SUPER DAD!!
HUNGRY GNASH!

His work at that point was, in his own words, "Terrible. But it did possess **vitality**!" Enough vitality to convince George Moonie, the **Beano** editor, to hire Bax on a free-lance basis. His first assignment was a rather hum-drum piece, "Oscar Krank," a kind of human Gyro Gearloose, medcap inventor. This was followed by the slightly worse "Charlie Choo," a Chinese detective (who had two sons, **Ah Choo** and **Choo Choo**!). Neither strip was the type of material Bax wanted to do, and both strips failed. With the second failure Bax was passed onto a sister comic, the **Topper**, and given the **Jamie the Gamie** strip (about a gamekeeper in the Highlands of Scotland). Bax still didn't feel inspired by his work and after a short while the editor, Ron Fraser, asked Bax to hold on the strip whilst he was away on vacation. Bax was on hold for a long time - the "hold" was his first professional brush-off!

At this point he realised that he would never be able to produce the type of cartooning he wanted to by working on other peoples scripts. In a mad fury of creativeness, Bax designed one of the most successful of the post war British strips; **Little Plum, Our Indian Chum**.

George Moonie read the sample pages, and asked Bax to return to the **Beano**. Once back in the industry he quickly took on more characters and branched out into other comics such as **Wizzard, Beezer** and, once again, **Topper**. Not only did this make his position much more secure by spreading the risk over several comics, but it also increases his wage quite considerable, by bringing his output up to seven pages a week.

This may not sound much to someone brought up on American comics, but when one considers that in Britain it is usual for the artist to pencil and ink his own work it soon begins to take on epic proportions. Especially when you allow for the fact that Baxendale also wrote his own scripts for pages with between 16 and 22 panels each.

At this time Bax was caught with the comic-bug. The triple enjoyment he gained from his work (the act of crea-

tion, the reaction to it at the office, and the reaction from the readers) provided him with extra energy and inspiration.

From the mid-'50s to the early '60s Bax slowly "took over" much of the contents of the **Beano**, making it very much his own comic. His pages were often referred to as the selling pages as his influence spread throughout the industry. For a time he even produced comic drawings for the logo, much like **Mad Magazine** did in the early 60's.

By the age of 30 he had become one of the most copied artists in the country. His style was passed along the line, quickly becoming the main cartooning style for the industry. All this work was, however, beginning to take it's strain on the artist/writer, resulting in a low vitality of spirit and a bout of pneumonia that kept him out of comics for nearly six months.

Today he readily admits that he returned to comics much too soon, dragging the illness on for years instead of months, but he was convinced by the **Beano** staff that the comic would suffer irrepairable damage without his special pages.

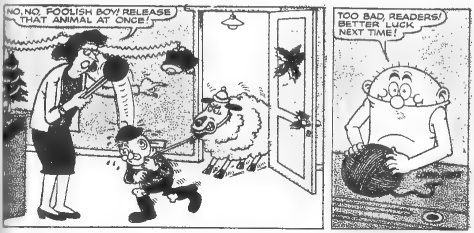
Bax feels that one of the main causes for his illness was what he referred to as the "Housewife's Disease" - isolation. Isolation brings disorientation and as such is the bug-bear of all artists.

It was about this time that he noticed how smug his employers had become about being the top selling British comics company. The company, D.C. Thompson, believed that they had a formula for success, a point of view on which Bax firmly disagrees. In his mind there is no formula, and cannot ever be. As comics rely on inventiveness they **must** change, and as such this negates formula writing and drawing. As he wrote in his autobiography:

I think that it (is) too easy to forget that at the heart of the industry the goods being sold are the product of a finely balanced mechanism - small teams of creative people working together. I reckoned that if the mechanism was handled carelessly it could easily crumble to dust and sift away through the fingers.

Bax has always been both inventive and impulsive, traits that combined in his resignation from the **Beano**. Editors often feel that any creative decision made by an artist without their consent is an affront to their authority. When Bax submitted a **Bash Street Kid's** page (a series about a rebellious gang of school-kids against the idealistic school-masters) in a new size he was told to re-draw it. He refused, feeling that the size submitted was the best format for the strip. When **ordered** to re-draw the piece he walked out of the office - never to return.

THE BASH STREET KIDS
FOR SANTA
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
LOOK, TEACHER! OUR SOCKS ARE FULL OF HOLES! WHAT'LL WE DO WHEN SANTA COMES?
WILL WE SEE WILFRID'S FACE AT LAST, READERS?



After sending off samples to other British companies he soon found a new job, this with Odhams, another then large, comics company.

Baxendale had never been completely satisfied with the standard of production/material in British comics. British comics are printed (generally) in black and white - with perhaps red tone added - on newsprint, and published once a week. Cheap paper and a distribution almost hostile to the comics produce an environment that tends to limit the comics appeal to a very young age group. Baxendale felt that it might be possible to publish a "Superbeano." He began to work on the format.

With his move to Odhams he had become one of the highest paid people in comics. At D.C. Thompson his wage averaged 4000 pounds ($7200), whilst at Odhams it had jumped to 8000 pounds ($14,400). A massive wage for 1964!

From this position of strength, he put forward the idea for a "superbeano" to the powers that be at Odhams. Because comic titles usually consist of two syllables - **Topper, Beano, Wizzard, Beezer** - Bax decided on the more dramatic single syllable **Wham!** Odhams would learn from this and later produce a whole line of such titled comics - **Pow, Smash,** etc. His comic would be completely different from any other comic on the market, being 24 pages of the wildest, zaniest characters ever contained in a single comic. What is more it was planned that each character would be drawn by one of the "greats" of British comics such as Ken Reid and David Law.

It didn't quite work out like that. Ken Reid agreed to work on the comic, but others found that it was not so convenient. Bax was also lucky to get the prolific British script-writer, Walter Thorburn, to work on the comic. With a print-run of 500,000 copies **Wham!** was launched on June 21st, 1964.

Compared with the life-span of most British comics **Wham!** did very well, lasting for four years. If a British comic can last for one year it is reckoned a success from the point of view of investment. Two years plus equals a good return on your money. Baxendale, however, sees the comic as a failure for not fulfilling his expectations of being a comic to last for decades.

The grind of designing, writing, editing, and drawing much of the comic proved too much for Baxendale at times, and he freely admits that he sometimes resorted to "lifting" plots from his previous work at D.C. Thompson. The result of this was that the gap between Bax and Thompsons was widened even further.

In 1968 **Wham!** merged with the new **Smash** comic and faded away. This merging of comics is part of the system known as Hatch-Match-and Dispatch, and it works like this: A company would publish a new comic with a certain print-run and in the first three issues free gifts would be given away to attract readers (stickers, badges, paper models etc.), the company then **plans** for declining sales by automatically cutting back on the initial print-run - **Hatch**, as sales fall the comic is linked with a more successful comic by transferring strips and sharing the title - **Smash and Wham!** - **Match**, after sales have stabilised the second title is dropped altogether - **Dispatched**. The system works very well and transfers new readers to the better established comics.

In the early '70s Bax was beginning to feel that he could never be completely happy in the traditional structure of the industry which could not offer him the full freedom of expression and secure legal protection for his work. When he had left the **Beano**, it hurt him to not only see his characters being used, but reprints of his work, with no repayment. Inspired by an article in the **Guardian** newspaper on the businessmen Colin Haycroft, who owned his own publishing company,

Bax decided to approach him with a new concept for the marketing of comic art. His idea was this: instead of working week in and week out on a comic at his normal pace he would work all out for six months to produce 80 pages of his best work. Doing away with the structure of the comic-book and claustrophic censorship of working for pre-teen readers he should be able to produce material above the normal standard of British comics. This work would be published once a year as a hard-back book by Haycroft's company.

Haycroft's company, Duckworths, had never published comic art. In fact they hadn't done much work for the juvinile market at all and knew nothing about the potential readership. On top of all this they were to decide on a project that would be a first in British comic history - the publication of a hard-back book based on a single character who had never appeared else-where. The entire concept was unproven and very risky.

The more they talked to Baxendale about the project the more interested they became. It was obvious that Bax knew his market. His craftmenship was of a striking order. In October, 1975, Duckworths agreed, and on Monday, 20th October, Leo Baxendale left the comics industry.

During his time it is reckoned that he produced over 5000 pages of art. Baxendale owns none of it. At an average of six hours a page it amounts to a lot of time and is a sore point with him. His new contract with Duckworths gave him copyright to everything bought. During the time between leaving Odhams and working

LITTLE PLUM
WHAT CAN I GET CHEEKY FOR CHRISTMAS?
AN HOUR LATER —
HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF ANYTHING YET?
NO!
THEN—
I KNOW!
BETTER NOT TELL THE OTHERS OR THEY'LL PINCH MY IDEA!
ER— I'VE SOMETHING TO DO— SEE YOU LATER.
ME, TOO.
AND ME.

on the Duckworth project, Baxendale worked for the other large comics company in England, Fleetways. During this period he worked on a series called **The Bedtime Story Bood** which was really a comic inside a comic. The center four pages of a comic were designed to be pulled out and folded into an eight page mini-comic. The series was a re-telling of traditional fairytales in a modern setting acted out by absurd characters much like the Dell comic **Fractured Fairy Tales** of the early '60s.

This concept of absurd characters, living outside the normal world of British comic characters, with a pen-

LATER--
I'VE GOT YOU UM BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT IN UM WORLD!
OH, NO, YOU HAVEN'T-- I HAVE!
THANK YOU!
HERE'S UM BEST PRESENT!
NO, IT'S NOT-- MINE IS!
EVERYBODY IN UM "BEANO" THINKS UM "BEANO BOOKS" UM BEST PRESENT IN UM WORLD, TOO! LOOK WHAT ALL UM "BEANO" FOLK HAVE GIVEN ME!

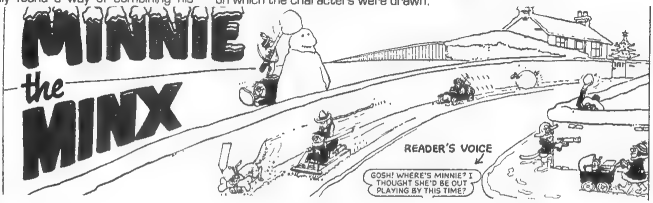
chant for adventrous trouble such as insect racing, hunting the Loch Ness Monster, and building Gang Huts culminated in the creation of **Willy the Kid**. Even his name is a phonetic link with the **Billy the Kid** rebelliousness of the popular concept of the Wild West.

The **Willy the Kid** book has been successful enough for three yearly books to be published. In fact the idea became so well established that the Dutch magazine **Eppo** decided to commission original two page strips based on the character. Bax is especially pleased with this deal because the Dutch not only pay a much higher rate but only buy the first printing rights.

It would appear that after many years of working in the industry he has finally found a way of combining his search for freedom and legal security. Except for one small detail. Baxendale is currently involved in a **Steve Gerber** like law-suit against D.C. Thompson over the rights to his creations whilst working for the **Beano**. During that time he created some of the most popular and enduring strips in contemporary comics: **Bash Street Kids,**(a class-room version of Our Gang), **Minnie the Minx** (another mischievous kid strip), and **Little Plum** (a put upon preteen indian boy). Like Gerber with his **Howard the Duck** character, Bax found that he had no rights to the characters when he left the company.

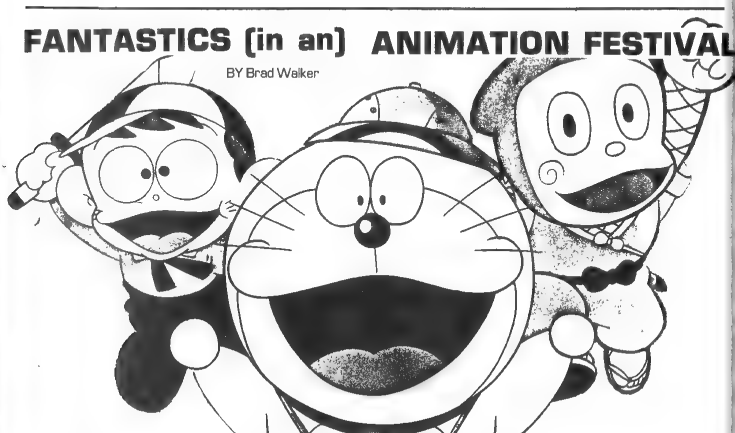
It was pointed out to Bax that he might be able to build up a case on the fact that he **did** own the art-board on which the characters were drawn. He has been, in his own words, "working with a solicitor for over a year now on the detailed preperation for the case, and the memoranda I have written are beginning to rival **War and Peace**. The machinary of the law grinds along exceedingly slow, but I have hopes that I will face D.C. Thompson in the High Court later this year - or at the latest by next year."

In the mean-time Bax is working on a new type of book for release 1st September, 1983. Part of the work will appear in a form which is completely new to comics. He declines to say anything more about it at the moment, but no doubt once his technique is revealed the British comics industry will, once more, never be the same.



FANTASTICS (in an) ANIMATION FESTIVAL

BY Brad Walker



"Watashi wa Amerikajin mangaka," satisfies the usherette. She scampers off, leaving an outsized American in a movie house full of little kids. Little Japanese kids. After all, this is spring vacation, and the noko are out of school (for one week). Soon the lights dim to bring us (the kids and the self-proclaimed American cartoonist) the adventures of a monster, a ninja and a robot cat.

Fujiyo Fujiko Studios (named for the two founders) have been on a roll for some time. Their lead figure, Doraemon (the robot cat) is perhaps the most recognizeable manga figure in Japan, an ikon similar to Snoopy or Mickey Mouse, featured on lunch boxes, stationary, radios, etc. And of course the TV show. Doraemon was followed up by others, including the two big ones we're going to see.

The first segment features Kaibutsu-Kun (Kye-buts koon), which roughly translates as "My pal the Moster." Kaibutsu is the Prince of Monsters, in fact. He comes from a land where everybody looks like a creature feature: mummies, zombies, eaglemen. Kaibutsu was sent to Japan for schooling (what better place than the land of Exam Hell?). His father, Lord Monster, gave him three bodyguards: Dracula, Wolfman, and Frankenstein (Here called Franken - a favorite in the series.)

They live in a gothic mansion [sub-let from the Munsters, no doubt]. In the TV series, Kaibutsu pals around with a human boy, Hiroshi, whose function is to act scared and point up how odd Kaibutsu looks. Unlike Doraemon and Hattorie-kun, Kaibustu does not live with his schoolboy friend; Hiroshi is usually an afterthought. Whereas the other two fantasy characters [or "fantastics"] spend much of their time "helping" their friends, Kaibutsu goes off on adventures for himself. The only reason for Hiroshi's existence is that the fantastic-normal relationship worked so well in Doraemon, which started the whole thing.

As it happens, this vacation's film opens not on Kaibutsu and company but on Demonland, home to a race of demons [same as in English] who are the longtime enemies of bordering Monsterland. The Demon Lord is finalizing his sneak attack on the Monster Lord, whom he skries upon

in a pool of water. The attack is fairly simple, just a sword plunged into the heart of a stone effigy of the Monster Lord, who thereupon keels over and sets the plot in motion.

Now we switch to Earth. Kaibutsu is hassling his three bodyguards; he'd rather watch TV than answer his royal correspondence. This action, familiar to fans of the TV show, has some interesting bits. Kaibutsu, lolling on a couch, stretches his arm over an angry Wolfman to grab a snack-cake. This shot is all the more jarring as it follows one of static figures. There are many patches meant to be carried over by the dialogue, but over all the animation compares very favorably in quality to US Saturday morning TV. [Kaibutsu, by the by, can switch from rubber to stone. Just to let you know.]

Then news arrives from Monster Land and the plot starts up again. Kaibutsu gets all teary-eyed, reminiscing about finger-wrestling with his father [not a fair contest; the finger had the height and reach]. Dracula, who is reptilian rather than suave, digs up an old tome and discovers that since the seizure is voodoo, the only cure is to pull the pin. And that bit of obvious knowledge points out that this whole show is an agglomeration of western myths; Hollywood monsters, voodoo dolls, flying carpets, and crystal balls all jumbled together. Monsterland itself has too many monsters, too many diversions from the nonexistent norm, to be effective. The compounded effect is neither horrorific or mysterious but confusing.

Kaibutsu and company set off. This point is underscored when human-friend Hiroshi visits and finds an empty mansion. Hiroshi has little enough to do in the show as it is, one wonders why he was left in. He had a much larger part in the first Kaibustu movie, where he [and we] saw Monsterland for the first time. He spent the first half getting scared by everybody [The monsterlanders must not get an opportunity like that too often] until he met King Monster and turned to stone. The last half was

spent in finding his cure. But that first film had a long travelling sequence showing the heroes reaching Monsterland on an intergalactic train in a tribute/parody of Galaxy 999, another TV show, it introduced figures [Eagleman, The Guardiens' sons only seen in passing this second time; and it was much longer, half a double bill with Doraemon. I suspect that Hattori-kun's sudden popularity took Fujiyo Fujiko by suprise and in

order to get him on the movie screens they edited down Kaibutsu [who is the least popular of the three]. So while the Tokyo-Monsterland travel sequences took up so much of the first film, they are wholly eliminated from this one, which leaves the location of Monsterland and Demon Land sort of a mystery for the non-Japanophone.

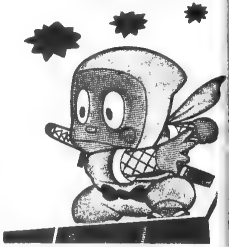
Demon Land looks like something out of Grey's Anatomy. Kaibutsu, on his broom, and the guardians on their carpet are ambushed by flying aortas. They travel through trachea, fight skeletal demons to reach a cranium castle with cupolas filled with some red liquid. The design is too clinical to be gruesome or gross. Along the way they are teased by Prince Demokin, Kaibutsu's opposite number. Demokin is not really malicious, just bantering: "My Pop can beat your Pop!" Kaibutsu and Demokin are not only much smaller, but also much more humanoid, than their fathers, a fact which might not go unnoticed with the young target audience.

Dracula, Franken, and Wolfman are holding off the guards when Kaibutsu confronts the Demon Lord in his Throne room. That worthy adjusts his skrying-pool to show the dying Monster King. Kaibutsu has just a few minutes to pull out the sword from the effigy, which is perched atop a gigantic spinal column. No problem for the Japanese Plastic Baby, which is why the Demon King has an inhibiting spell cast; Kaibustu cannot just stretch his arm out, he has to climb up, bone by bone, and wrench it out. Kaibutsu proceeds to do so, proving his courage, and the Demon Lord prepares to blow him away when Prince Demokin intervenes, pleading that Kaibutsu's love for his father should be honored and that he, Demokin, wishes he could love his father that much. ["Oh, my papa..."] At this, the Demon Lord's eyes grow pupils, which means he's gotten a soul. At least in Japanese eyes. He stays his hand, and Kaibutsu, who can't get any leverage to pull out the sword, manages to rock the effigy and topple the whole works into the skrying pool, freeing the sword and preventing the Demon Lord from ever plotting again should he suffer a relapse.

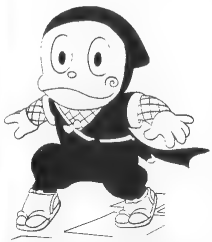
Everything ends happily. The Monster King returns to his throne, the be-irised Demon Lord and his son play the same games we saw in the falshback ["To meee he was so wonderfullll..."] and Kaibutsu joins Hiroshi for a game of Baseball.

The next segment features Hattori-kun, the dar-horse from Fujiyo Fujiko stables. A ninja must have seemed at least as unlikely a cartoon hero as a ghost B.C. [**B**efore **C**asper]. What can an animated ninja do that Jackie Chan can't?

Well, Jackie Chan can't literally fade away to avoid harm. Hattori-kun at one point is actually hit by throwing stars but vanishes away. Of course



he's phenomenally accurate with a sword, or anything else; asked to entertain a little girl, he jumps up and down, snapping the rice crackers she tosses in his mouth. Hattori is brave, egile, studious, loyal, and would be more than a little dull if the show revolved on him alone. More than the other two, this show depends on ensemble playing. Besides Hattori we have his little brother Shinzo and dog Umeko. Those names - Hattori and Shinzo - are archaic Japanese; it's as if two Child Crusaders, Ethelred and Gawain, found themselved in modern England. Shinzo is nearly as skilled as his big brother but a lot more fun-loving and chuckling; Umeko is just a ball of yarn, total comic relief. Then



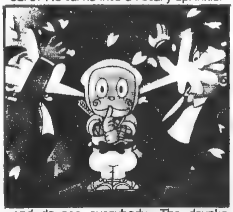
there's the stock Fujiyo Fujiko domestic scene, with a young boy (Kemumaki), his parents, school chums, and personal enemy–a modern-day, "bad" ninja, who has a pet cat.

Hattori's disciplined, low-key character is contrasted with almost every member in turn; he is more studious than Kemumaki, more able than his father, more controlled than Shinzo, more nice than the villains, natch, and more stone-faced than anyone else. Whereas Kaibutsu-kun's face is dominated by his eyes and ears, and Doraemon's by his mouth, Hattori-kun holds his in near immobility, to the point where the slightest variation is noticeable. This gives him a deadpan quality, a Buster Keaton touch in keeping with his understated personality.

As previously mentioned, this whole segment looks like a rush order to capitalize on a surprise winner. The format has Kemumaki reading Hattori's journal as a lead-in to several TV episodes. One will suffice:

Hattori's household - Father, Mother, Kemumaki and the mini-ninjas - are picnicking under the cherry blossoms. Cherry blossoms only last for about a week in Japan. They are bothered by some loud drunks nearby, and when father goes over to complain these boisterous office workers fill a bucket with beer and force him to drink it. Up steps Hattori, face masked as ever; without a word he takes the father's place and drains the bucket. Immediately Shinzo and Umeko refill it with the partymakers' beer and sake, mixed together. While he's emptying this one (and the next), his brother and dog start in on the food: skewered pork, sushi, rice cakes. But the revellers are more concerned with Hattori; in the first place, he's drunk all their booze; in the second place, where did he put it all?

In answer Hattori puts his finger to his lips and starts to spray it out his ears! He turns into a rotary sprinkler

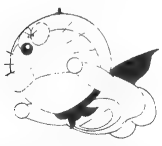


and douses everybody. The drunks start chasing him; he heads for a tree; he runs right up the tree and lets them complete a couple of circuits before getting back in the game. Just before they tire out he leads them to another tree and shoots up to the top. As they circle the trunk, panting, he stamps his foot and silkworms slide down to about eye-level, scaring the partygoers into compliance. The ending has Father pouring out moderate drinks in his best Robert Young manner while Shinzo and Umeko hold their distended tummies.

Of the entire bill, this segment has perhaps the most Japanalia, both overt (cherry trees, silkworms) and subtle (the beer bottles, the picnic food, even the white-collar drunks are authentic). With Hattori-kun, Fujiyo Fujiko has created an icon that taps into the Japanese "identity"; a character who is clearly, completely, and solely Japanese. A ninja that doesn't go "Beep Beep!"

Now we get to the meat of the show, Fujiyo Fujiko's flagship, **Doraemon**. From monsters and military history we move into science fiction and robotics. Doraemon is a robot cat, just like Uncle Martin is a Martian, Samantha is a witch, and so on; it's his license to do anything. This is a case where fantasy defers to form: a weekly series cannot show too much change in the lives of their characters. The episodes must stop where they start, for all intents and purposes; after all, who knows what order they'll get shown in? In a sitcom formula that has a fantastic (Doraemon/Mr. Ed/Jeannie) living with a normal (white-collar, middle class) family, the fantastic can bring about all sorts of benefits but they must **all** fall flat or cause no lasting advantage. Samantha's father gives Darrin a magic watch and Darrin (eventually) relinquishes it. Doraemon turns his pal Nobita into a movie star and an artist only to find that unearned fame is hollow. Benefits are only "good" when earned by the sweat of one's brow. The only lasting changes are listed in the TV Guide at the start of the new season.

Doraemon is a robot cat with a pouch and no ears (they were chewed off by a mouse). He comes from the future and has myriad gadgets, all nicely cataloged, one for every purpose. An enlarging beam, a facial eraser, a mind-switcher. Doraemon



is designed for TV animation as much as Mickey was for early cinema. The Mouse, like the movies, was black and white to begin with. He had a bouncy body of rubber balls and pipe cleaners to swing to the soundtrack. Doraemon is bright primary red-white-and-blue; in a medium of close-ups he stands 1 ½ heads high. Mickey has three fingers for ease in animation; Doraemon, child of TV, has **no** fingers, just tennis ball-hands on stiff robot arms. Doraemon is so easy to draw that they set the process to music; whole classes of Grade-schoolers have sketched him in concert! This simplicity of design helped make Doraemon the most merchandised character in Japanese animation [for a time].

This is the fourth Doraemon half-feature in three years; it, like the others, is based on a previously published comic-book story--which helps explain how the studio can release a new film every school vacation. The problem is, how to sustain a movie with a series of characters who must return to where they started for the next TV season? The answer has been to introduce new characters only for that one movie. In the first, **Doraemon**, Nobita and company return a baby dinosaur to one million B.C.; in the second, they stumble onto a cockeyed parallel world of flying eggs and powderpuff rabbits. They free the human inhabitants from tyranny using baseballs and toy bullets. The third movie has Nobita impersonate Momontaro, the Peach-Boy, Japan's folk hero. In each case, new characters [the dinosaur, the other dimensionals, Momontaro's parents, and animal helpers] were introduced, their problems solved, goodbyes said, and the cast of Doraemon is set for their next adventure. This pattern holds for this latest Doraemon epic--but there's a hitch.

How many comic book covers have you seen that give the ending away? Fewer than those that just don't apply, but still...I'm thinking in particular of an **Action** story where the plot twist was an oblique attack against Green Lantern with Superman as the red herring; the shock was supposed to come when the aliens switched their attack. Unfortunately the cover --Superman bending over GL, moaning "Why did you do this?"-- gives the whole thing away. This is the exact same situation with **Doraemon Movie #4**; anybody who sees the poster outside the theater can guess the main plot development.

Half the poster shows Doraemon & Co. in Africa, on safari. The kids are in Khaki. Also there's a little white puppy, growling at the jungle beasts. This dog is not a regular on the TV show. He is the central character on the other half of the poster, only now he stands on two legs, wears a simple shift, and engages in swordplay with mastiff legionaries. So already we can tell that the story revolves around this little dog [Peko] and his doggy civilization hidden somewhere in [just one guess, now] Africa. But the build-up, in the actual film, is much more gradual and takes us down some unusual subplots.

The film finds Peko resting inside a water pipe. Sitting on this pipe, having a discussion, are Nobita and his sometime-friends Tsuneo and Giant. Giant is restless; they [along with the girl Shizuko and of course, Doraemon] have been to the Arctic, been to the desert; but there's one place they've never had any adventures -- Africa.

"No problem!" says Nobit. "I'm sure Doraemon can take us there. We'll need a boat, and cameras, and..."

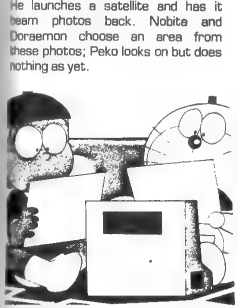
"What!" says the Giant. He does not want this to be a sissy sort of trip, with Doraemon's magic gadgets taking the fun out of the danger. No, he, Giant, wants a real man's trip, designed to show himself off at best advantage. And Nobita better get that across to Doraemon--or else.

[Another example of a fantastic bringing no real changes. Giant--in America we'd call him "Fatso"--used to cow Nobita. Then Nobita found Doraemon and now Giant cows them both. Actually most of the time Doraemon and Nobita come out about even with the bully Giant and today Tsuneo.]

Peko looks thoughtful. He follows Nobita and, in the best Leave-It-To-Beaver fashion, gets himself adopted into the family. He proves his worth as a moral example to Nobita, washing his face and eating neatly. He sleeps in a doghouse-poster Doraemon puts up.

Doraemon, by the way, does not eat with the family, ostensibly because he's a robot, but also because of his nature. Where Kaibutsu is "The Strange Boy Next Door" and does not interact that much with Hiroshi, and Hattori is a sort of house guest who helps Mother and Father as often as he does Kemumaki, Doraemon is like an Imaginary Companion who works mostly alongside Nobita. Probably because Doraemon was the first.

Nothing special about Doraemon's entrance in this film. He's scared to death at the thought of going to Africa, but Nobita calms him down and asks for a relatively safe place to go. Does Doraemon consult his computer brain? An encyclopedia? National Geographic? Not this cat. He launches a satellite and has it beam photos back. Nobita and Doraemon choose an area from these photos; Peko looks on but does nothing as yet.



Suddenly we're in Africa. The gang's wearing Khaki, they're on a boat, and the animals are getting wilder. In fact, the snakes have slithered aboard and everybody's panicking when they suddenly pull into the harbor. The rubber animals subside and the company is

welcomed to "Africaland" [in English]. Giant and Tsuneo are furious. Never mind that they were as scared as anybody five minutes ago. They advance threateningly on Nobita and he wakes up. Clearly, this trip will have to be pretty scary for Nobita's peace of mind.

Now the trip itself. Giant appoints himself leader and has everybody count off:

"One!" Nobita.

"Tow!" Doraemon.

"Three!" Tsuneo.

"Four!" Shizuko.

"Five!"

"Five?? Who said five?"

"I–I don't know. There's no one here but Peko the puppy." It's, as Yul Brynner would say, a puzzlement.

They leave for Africa via an ordinary door [more of the Imaginary Playmate idea]. As soon as they're on the other side Doraemon folds it back up in his pouch. They start hiking through the jungle, and why doesn't Peko do something?

Giant, resplendent in a Superman cape, is ready for anything except what he gets. He's chased by a leopard; Shizuko dons Doraemon's extra-strong gloves and tosses him away. similarly pythons, gorillas, and others fall before Doraemon's shrink-ray, stun-beam, flying-propeller beanies, and other hardware well-known to regular viewers. Of course, it's Giant who shows the most fear and has to be rescued. And is he grateful? Not on your life! He's boiling at how easy the cat's gadgets are making it for everybody [except him].

For example, lunchtime. Doraemon brings a telephone out of his pouch and suggests they send out for Chinese. Giant says no, they'll eat what grows in the jungle. So okay. Doreemon injects a plant with some concoction or other and it sprouts a coconut that pops open for a hot, convenient serving of curry-rice [very popular among Japanese youngsters; it is to real Indian cuisine what Del Taco is to authentic Mexican].

After lunch Nobita has to go off into the woods. So do Tsuneo and Giant. We see their backs as Giant chuckles, "At least we don't need gadgets for this!"

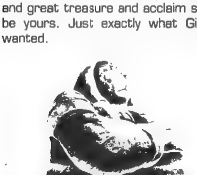
Except–what about the girl, Shizuko, who's blushing and fidgeting? She asks Doraemon, "Do you have a spare ladies' room on you?"

"In my Pouch? How unsanitary!" Instead he pulls out the door and Shizuko rushes right home as Giant burns. [And this is a movie for the youngest kids. That should say something about US-Japan cultural differences.]

After some more defeats from the animal kingdom Giant is ready to call it quits. All are sad he didn't have a nice time; Peko looks after him, thoughtfully.

Now we switch to Giant's house. It's night and he's in bed, the traditional futon. His mood is like someone who wants to beat his father at chess/checkers/cards with no handicap, no cheating on the father's part. Giant wants to be the best without working for it. Interesting that a show that grew out of a bullied boy's wish should concern itself with the bully and his motivations. Giant has almost self-pitied himself to sleep when–

Thunder! Lightning! A gigantic dog-statue appears before Giant, handing him a map. Follow the map, it says, and great treasure and acclaim shall be yours. Just exactly what Giant wanted.



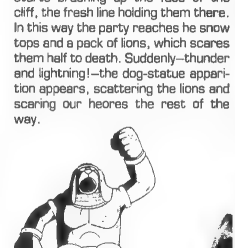
Back in the vacant lot, next day. The door's set up and all ready to go. Giant has his map out, ready to take all the glory for his achievement—but first, he insists, let's leave all those spoilsport gadgets behind. And they wrap the gadgets [the ones we've already seen in action] in a blanket and put the parcel in the pipe that Peko had been resting in earlier. Now they're ready.

Much quieter this time, they ford up a river in a motorboat with the TV theme all around them. Shizuko is eating a banana, Tsuneo is piloting, Doraemon and Nobita are counting crocodiles and everyting's calm until Giant takes over the wheel and runs them aground. Instantly the Crocs start to come on board; the only one who keeps his head is Peko, still on all fours, yapping at the intruders as Doraemon and friends head for the mast. Giant is told to forget his scruples. Doraemon gets his door out--only to have it slip and be chomped to splinters by the crocs!

They've lost their way back and any minute now will be reptile chow, unless a tribe of natives drives off the crocodiles with spears and blowguns. One does.

The contingent is invited into the native camp, which they are amazed to see has a doggy totem pole. Everything goes peacefully [no cannibal pots in evidence] until Tsuneo asks an impertinent question and gets them chased out. In a clearing, Doraemon presses the top of his pith helmet and it expands into a cabana for the night. Giant sulks and is comforted by Peko.

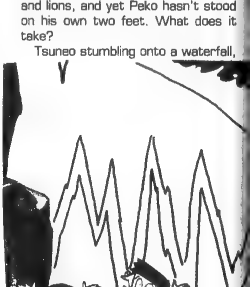
In the morning the fivesome is confronted by a mountain. Doraemon hauls out a bucket of paint and starts brushing up the face of the cliff, the fresh line holding them there. In this way the party reaches he snow tops and a pack of lions, which scares them half to death. Suddenly—thunder and lightning!—the dog-statue apparition appears, scattering the lions and scaring our heores the rest of the way.



Let's take stock. Peko didn't reveal himself in Japan, probably because he wanted to check out this Doraemon. He couldn't stand tall on the first Africa trip, because that was the dream. He didn't do so during the second, probably because he wasn't near enough to the old hometown.

Now we're almost halfway through the picture; Doraemon and friends have been beset by aligators, aborigins, and lions, and yet Peko hasn't stood on his own two feet. What does it take?

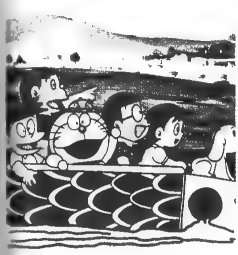
Tsuneo stumbling onto a waterfall,



that's what. As he is hauled out we hear applause and pan over to see Peko sitting on a rock and clapping his paws. He introduces himself—"Peko! You can TALK!"—and does some quick plot exposition in a series of stills. We see dogs and monkeys side-by-side, develop into canis sapiens and homo sapiens. The dog-people are hunted down and forced to build their own hidden civilization, which has stagnated around Greco-Roman architecture. The dangers of isolationism. Peko is really Prince Kuntakku, youthful ruler of the glory that is Dogland. During a coup he was forced into a trunk and shot out to sea. He ended up in Japan where he

heard about Doraemon, and there we have it. It's enough that Peko is intelligent; discovering he's a prince too, is almost too contrived. But on the other hand an exiled prince would put a lot of effort into his return.

The **Rightful Ruler Returned**: Intrigue! Adventure! (as Giant points out). It goes without saying that Doraemon and friends will help Kuntakku regain his throne. They enter the waterfall in a boat shaped like



a Japanese carp.

Now begins the Costume Epic, sub-Errol Flynn. Kuntakku sees one of his subjects—**his** subjects—getting tossed around by mean ol' Doberman Pinschers in Centurion suits. Disregarding his own safety, just like a **real** leader, Kuntakku confronts and holds off the four armed guards. (Doraemon & Co. sit this one out; this is to prove Kuntakku is worthy of our admiration by stupidly blowing his cover.) The rescuee is a young pup named Chippo, whose parents are political prisoners under the present regime. In return for their eventual freedom he caches the outlanders on his farm.

The guards bring the news of Kuntakku's return to King Gubrangu, a bulldog in a crown. We also meet his advisor, a bulgybrowed Pekinese (as ffolkes would say, "Which one of you is the mastermind?"), and the languid Princess held in Durance Vile. She is Doomed to a Fate Worse Than Death —in this case, marriage to Gubrangu— unless Her Hero rescues her in the Nick of Time. Cliches On Parade. true, but this is half of a 90-minute cartoon and any in-depth characterization must be sacrificed for speed.

Of which there is plenty. As a dog, Peko looked perfectly natural; now he's on two legs, he still looks natural, even in an orange toga. First, he tells the assembly, they have to release Brusus, his mentor and a **good** bulldog, out of prison; secondly they have to reach the giant dog-statue, the one in the aerial photograph. The images that Giant saw and that scared off the lions were holographs produced by Kuntakku's pendant.

Brusus' rescue takes almost no time at all when you know a robot cat with a teleport gimmick in his pouch. But instead of appearing right in the cell, and disappearing the same way, they have to materialize outside and fight the guards. This does not help their standing with the government in power which puts up "WONTED" posters (that's how they spelled it, in English and upside down. It would seem that Japanese animators are more than passing familiar with the US comics.).

While armed dogs on donkeys pass through the night streets Our Heroes are holed up in Chippo's house, planning the big assault. All know they might not make it through the next day (ahem). What does Shizuko miss

most of all? A nice warm bath! [Shizuko, remember, is the girl, the one who had to return home to use the toilet.] So Doraemon gives her a walkie-talkie that changes the picture to Shizuko in the bath. Teleportation? An Illusion? Hard to say; this is one occasion where the information isn't depicted and knowing the language would be a help.

Now comes the big assault on the Dog Statue. From their concealment in Chippo's haycart Kuntakku's coterie makes their way to a hollow tree. Are they in any danger from quasi-Romans on donkeys with spears? Maybe, but that's irrelevent. These dogs have tanks and airships, both made of wood; apparently the Age of Iron got as far as their swords and that's it. These airships—viking boats with helicopter blades—and tanks are detailed in schematics from the movie's book, showing just where the Impossible Engine goes, etc. Of course, Doraemon cares less about that than the fact they both shoot fireballs which pit the area around the tree.

"How will we get there?" he asks.

"You won't; I must," says Kuntakku, the Noble Dog. And he makes his way through No Man's Land at a regal pace, as befits a charmed life.

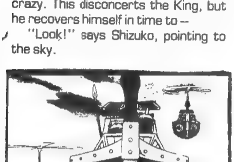
Suddenly Giant appears behind Kuntakku. In a nice bit he and the Prince argue about his accompaniment but we can't hear them over the bombardment. Then a close one knocks them both to the ground; they

smile, shake hands, and move on.

Doraemon and Nobita look at each other, nod, and join the throng; with Shizuko right behind. Tsuneo takes the longest before following. [Brusus was held up back at the haycart].

They make it to the foot of the statue before being surrounded by enemy troops. King Gubrangu [doesn't every head of state go into battle?] is about to order their impalement when Shizuko gets out her bath-gimmick and started talking to it like crazy. This disconcerts the King, but he recovers himself in time to—

"Look!" says Shizuko, pointing to the sky.



Five flying figures, very small as yet. But soon we see that Kuntakku, Nobita, Giant, Shizuko, Tsuneo, and Doraemon are about to be rescued by—Nobita, Giant, Shizuko, Tsuneo, and Doraemon!

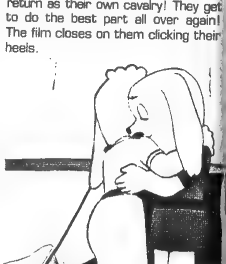
Yes! They themselves, wearing the weapons we saw earlier, the ones Giant left behind. The flying newcomers lay out the guards, letting our original heroes into the statue.

They reach the actual heart of the statue, but Kuntakku goes on to the head where his pendant places him in actual communion. Giant leads the others in winding the heart and this gigantic statue, this clockwork dog as big and as old as the Sphinx, comes to life like it was in the showroom! The wonders of the Ancient World. You've heard of **Shogun Warriors** and **Mobil Suit Gundam**? This is like **Mongrel Suit Golem**.

Big battle scene now. Kuntakku has a swordfight inside the contraption with the turncoat captain of the guard; the Great Stone Face is mopping up the battlefield, stepping on tanks, swatting the aerodynamically-hopeless ships from the sky. Oddly enough both types of war-vehicles are mysteriously empty, giving us a battle without carnage. Just like **Star Wars**. Big Guns Don't Kill People, Just Ships. The only ship that's manned (dogged?), with the brainy Peko commanding, is knocked end-over-end to explode behind mountains. Doraemon's contingent plays mop-up.

The battle ends happily. Kuntakku embraces his princess while the kids look on and cheer. But before the triumphal procession there's one loose end to tie up—where did the duplicates come from? From Doraemon's door, which cuts through time as well as space. They took a third trip to Africa that intersected with their second, this time bringing the weapons cache. They homed in on Shizuko's bath-machine. [This comes out in dialogue between the two Shizukos; Nobita, Giant, and Tsueno are knocked dumb by the paradoxes] Doraemon #2 pulls out the Door and leaves it in #1's care, after leading his group back. So Doraemon has his door back—but where did it come from, after being slivered by alligators? And will Doraemon #2 still have one, or can he build another? This is not the place to go into such questions [what is?], but it is nice to see a "kids' picture" mention such a concept, even in passing.

And then the Grand Procession, withconfetti and music. Chippo's parents are out of jail, The Prince and the Princess are back on the throne, and the cast of the TV show is given heroes' honors. Finally goodbyes are said and Doraemon and the kids go back through the door. Only this time, after a breather, they grab the sack of super-gimmicks and get ready to return as their own cavalry! They get to do the best part all over again! The film closes on them clicking their heels.



Nothing is said about Giant's new-found sense of self-worth; just showing him on an equal footing with the rest, pulling his weight in the battle scenes, is enough.

And so ends another Fujiyo Fujiko triptych. It did good business irrespective of good or bad reviews; there just aren't that many movies you can take the kids to, in Japan as well as in America. What we saw was not so much fantastic animation, as it was animation about fantastics, led by Doraemon who was number one until—but that's the subject of my next article.

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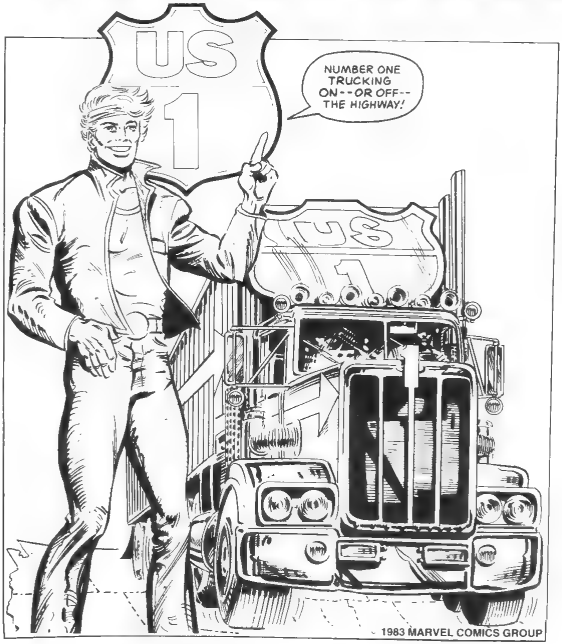

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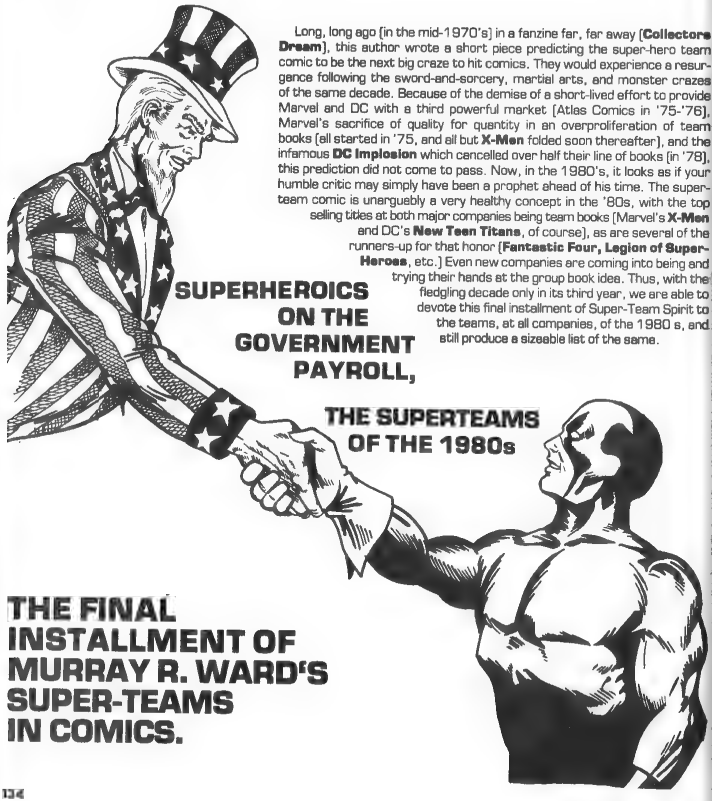
SUPER-TEAM SPIRIT

by Murray R. Ward



Long, long ago (in the mid-1970's) in a fanzine far, far away (**Collectors Dream**), this author wrote a short piece predicting the super-hero team comic to be the next big craze to hit comics. They would experience a resurgence following the sword-and-sorcery, martial arts, and monster crazes of the same decade. Because of the demise of a short-lived effort to provide Marvel and DC with a third powerful market (Atlas Comics in '75-'76), Marvel's sacrifice of quality for quantity in an overproliferation of team books (all started in '75, and all but **X-Men** folded soon thereafter), and the infamous **DC Implosion** which cancelled over half their line of books (in '78), this prediction did not come to pass. Now, in the 1980's, it looks as if your humble critic may simply have been a prophet ahead of his time. The super-team comic is unarguebly a very healthy concept in the '80s, with the top selling titles at both major companies being team books (Marvel's **X-Men** and DC's **New Teen Titans**, of course), as are several of the runners-up for that honor (**Fantastic Four, Legion of Super-Heroes**, etc.) Even new companies are coming into being and trying their hands at the group book idea. Thus, with the fledgling decade only in its third year, we are able to devote this final installment of Super-Team Spirit to the teams, at all companies, of the 1980 s, and still produce a sizeable list of the same.

SUPERHEROICS ON THE GOVERNMENT PAYROLL,

THE SUPERTEAMS OF THE 1980s

THE FINAL INSTALLMENT OF MURRAY R. WARD'S SUPER-TEAMS IN COMICS.

I. THE MARVEL TEAMS

Marvel Comics come out of the 1970s into the 80s looking much better from a super-teams standpoint than they had coming from the 60s into the 70s, although they had less team titles out than they had had in the **mid**-70s. Where only the Fantastic Four and the Avengers had retained their own titles after Marvel's first decade, they were joined in this distinction by the revived and repopulated X-Men and the unorthodox Defenders in the second. The FF had eschewed all "substitute" members to concentrate once more on it's original "family" of four main characters, and almost immediately went "Back to the basics" with writer/artist John Byrne at the helm. The Avengers continued their traditional game of musical membership, this time with not a few twists provided by Marvel's Editor-In-Chief Jim Shooter, who returned the group to their founding membership plus a few hangers-on. The X-Men ceasedc to be thought of as the "new" X-Men, as they passed the point in number of issues at which the first mutant team had been cancelled, while retaining a suprisingly stable core of characters [one retirement, Banshee, one death, Phoenix, and one new recruit, Sprite], and preparing to spawn a spin-off series, a first for a team book [the **New Mutants**, as yet unpublished at this writing, will be the first new super-team not covered in our series of articles]. The Defenders, iconoclastic as ever, made the supernatural their domain under writer J.M. DeMatteis, with such fantasy heroes as Dr. Strange, Valkyrie, Devil-Slayer, Son of Satan, and the newly-created Gargoyle leading the more "normal" super-

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members into a struggle with demonic powers.

The 80s have also seen a number of basically non-super-powered teams come into being, which deserve brief mention here, although they are not within the province of this series. The Shogun Warriors, a combination of other-media-adaptation, toy, and spin-off comics, was born and died early in the 80s. The main characters in the book, stuntman Richard Carson, pilot Genji Odashu, and marine biologist Ilongo Savage, were Marvel creations of writer Doug Moench. Their "powers", as such, came from giant robots they piloted: Raydeen, Combatra, and Dangard Ace, respectively, who were Japanese cartoon series characters before being adapted by Marvel in collaboration with their advent as children's toys. The title was handled in the same style as the just-cancelled **Godzilla**, in which yet another Japanese robot character, Red Ronin, had appeared. The Shoguns were not to last in this incarnation, though. After 20 issues and the loss of their super-scientific/mystic mentors, known as the Followers of the Light, they appeared once more as guest-stars in an issue of **Fantastic Four** [the FF had guested in the final issues of **Shogun Warriors**] in which the robots were destroyed and all the loose plot-threads of the cancelled series were tied up. Two more toy-inspired teams have recently debuted: **G.I. Joe**, which, despite the tag line "A Real American Hero", concerns the activities of a code-named anti-terrorist strike force attatched to the U.S. military and boasting a membership closer in number to the Legion of Super-Heroes than to Sgt. Fury's commandoes; and **Team America**, a quintet of motorcyclists from varying backgrounds who battle evils both mundane and outre in between racing gigs. Neither team possesses actual super-powers [except for Team America's Forever-People-like ability to sommon a sixth, mysterious member known as the Marauder]. They are more akin to the Blackhawks and the Challengers of the Unknown than to the super-powered heroes we are concerned with here.

Marvel's first new team of the 80s of any longevity, which **does** contain super-powered members, is also a product, the first such, of an agreement between the comics company and a toy manufacturer. **The Micronauts** tells the story of a half-dozen (later more) freedom fighters battling a tyrannical despot in an other-dimensional realm known as the Microverse. Under writer/creator Bill Mantlo, the series has evolved as a synthesis of many past, successful, comics concepts: Commander Arcturus Rann, modelled on the toy "Space Glider", the leader of the group, owes his name to the adopted homeworld of DC hero Adam Strange and much of his origin to Guardians of the Galaxy member Vance Astro; Marionette, aka Princess Mari, an original Mantlo creation and the team's de rigeur distaff member, is a Princess Leia figure straight out of **Star Wars** (and indeed, the entire raison d'etre of the series and its villain, the Darth Vader-like Baron Karza, owes a debt to George Lucas's world of space opera); Bug, the renamed "Galactic Warrior" toy, is an insect adventurer reminiscent of Jack Kirby's Forager in **The New Gods**. Other founding Micronauts include the robotic duo of Biotron and diminutive, non-humanoid Microtron, whose relationship bears a distinct similarity to that between **Star Wars'** C-3PO and R2D2 and, Acroyear, latest in Marvel's seemingly endless line of super-heroic warrior-monarchs (e.g. Sub-Mariner, Black Bolt, the Black Panther, Thor, etc.). Perhaps suprisingly, considering its derivative origins, the book proved an immediate sales suc-

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ness, easily outclassing its sister publication released at the same time, **Shogun Warriors**. The first year's worth of issues, with art by Michael Golden, and chronicling the team's misadventures on Earth [where, in keeping with their name, they are the size of toys in comparison with the native humans] and eventual victory over Baron Karza's regime, are a delight. Currently, the title suffers from a sense of deja vu, with the Micronauts again and again being forced to return to Earth and again and again battling a maniac ruler of Homeworld [first a resurrected Karza and then a power-maddened Force Commander]. An inability to retain a steady artist for any length of time has plagued the book since the departure of Golden. **Micronauts** also holds the distinction of being the only direct-sales-only, super-team title, having taken on that status, along with **Moon Knight** and **Ka-Zar**, in 1981. Most recently, low sales have forced this title to bi-monthly status.

Another new Marvel team, one which has yet to make a second appearance or attain its own feature, does boast a strangely-familiar origin. As in **Avengers #1**, a villain causes it to seem that the ever-incredible Hulk has turned evil [as opposed to simply subject to fits of destructive, confused rage], and Rick Jones, the monster's sidekick, sends out a radio alert via his Teen Brigade for super-heroes to

come to the brute's aid and/or subdue him, as necessary. In **Avengers #1**, Rick was calling the Fantastic Four and got the soon-to-be-founding members of the Avengers instead; in **Incredible Hulk #265**, he calls the Avengers and gets five south-western-based costumed crime-fighters, who became the Rangers. These include Red Wolf, the Amerindian crusader who once guest-starred with the Avengers [and mistakenly claims to have **been** an Avenger in this story] and briefly possessed his own comic in the 70s, Night Rider, the modern-day descendant of the ghostly Marvel western **hero of the** 1800s, Texas Twister, a roving hero/villain who had for a time **been** a SHIELD Super-agent, Shooting Star, Twister's new show-biz partner and girl-friend, and Firebird, another newly-created female character, secretly a Mexican social worker. The Rangers, like the Micronauts, are a product of Bill Mantlo's imagineering. They will undoubtedly pop up as guest-stars a few more times before being promoted to a regular berth or otherwise installed as part of the Marvel mythos.

If the Rangers' shared motif is their identity as Western characters, that of another super-team who started life as guest-stars, Alpha Flight, is their status as the first and only Canadian super-group. Created visually by John Byrne, who hails from Calgary, Alberta, this government-sponsored group from ye author's home and native land includes Vindicator, whose powers, like Iron Man's, come from his technological uniform, Snowbird, a metamorph who can take on animal forms, Northstar and Aurora, a pair of super-speeding

siblings, Sherman, an Indian medicine man with real magical powers, and Sasquatch, who is able to effect a Hulk-like transformation into a super-strong monster at will. After several appearances, mostly in the Claremont/Byrne **X-Men**, whose member Wolverine is an ex-comrade of theirs, Alpha Flight found themselves officially disbanded by the government of Canada due to lack of funds. This, however, has not stopped them from making additional appearances, singly and together, in other Marvel titles. A series, produced by John Byrne, is scheduled for 1983.

One does not get through a series as long as Super-Team Spirit without having a few mistakes creep in.

Among these is that while the series covered the twin teams of doppelgangers called the Crusaders, one appearing in Marvel's **Invaders** and being a take-off on DC's Freedom Fighters, and the other simultaneously appearing in **Freedom Fighters** and resembling the Invaders, it made no mention of Marvel's super-heroic burlesque of DC's Justice League. Since this is the final column in the series, the error will be rectified by belatedly adding to the teams of the 80's the recently revived and augmented (in the pages of **Defenders**) membership of the Squadron Supreme. Actually, Marvel readers met these heroes' evil counterparts, the Squadron Sinister, some years before the actual JLA-mimicking heroes of a parallel world. In **Avengers #69-71**, the alien Grandmaster used the Squadron Supreme members as models for four Marvel-Earth-dwelling super-villains of his own creation. Since then, the Squadron Sinister quartet have gone their separate ways. Hyperion (Superman's double) vanished into another dimension in the company of the Femizon Thundra, Whizzer (Flash) changed his costume and name to Speed Demon to avoid confusion with the All-Winners Squad hero, Dr. Spectrum (Green Lantern) lost his powers with the destruction of his sentient prism-weapon, and Nighthawk (Batman) reformed to join the Defenders. Meanwhile, the real Squadron Supreme made their debut as other-dimensional heroes who fought both alongside and against the Avengers on various occasions. In addition to the above four, the Squadron Supreme included pastiches of the Atom (Tom Thumb), Hawkman (American Eagle, later renamed Cap'n Hawk), Green Arrow (Hawkeye, later renamed Golden Archer), Black Canary (Lady Lark), Aquaman (Amphibion), and more recently, Wonder Woman (Power Princess), Zatanna (Arcanna), and Firestorm (Nuke). (Perhaps alternate versions of J'onn J'onzz, Snapper Carr, Elongated Man, Hawkgirl, Red Tornado, and even the Phantom Stranger are lurking in the background as yet.) At least one fan considered the Marvel send-up of DC's most popular heroes worthy of its own continuity, as the mid-70s saw a barrage of letters in Marvel lettercols from one Garnet H. G. Barcelo, each with the closing, "Serialize the Squadron Supreme!"

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II. THE DC TEAMS

DC also came out of the 70s in slightly better super-team shape than it went in, although, as at Marvel, several team series had been created or revived only to be cancelled during the following decade. The **Justice League of America** continued its uninterrupted run with writer Gerry Conway showing no sign of stopping before surpassing Gardner Fox's record for consecutively-scripted issues. The Legion of Super-Heroes, now at last in a comic bearing the group's name, also survived into the 80s and has recently been the beneficiary of high-quality story and artwork by returning scribe Paul Levitz and new artist Kieth Giffen. Giffen is apparently one of the few DC pencillers who enjoys the complicated LSH strip with its multitude of characters and its futuristic setting.

Of course, the sucess story of the 80s thus far is the **New Teen Titans** series, reuniting Len Wein (as editor) and Marv Wolfman (as writer) with the strip which saw their first efforts at super-hero scripting over a decade before. Together with artist George Perez, they recrafted the twice-cancelled teenage heroes into a mold not unlike that of Marvel's second team of X-Men, as regulars Robin, Kid Flash, and Wonder Girl, plus ex-Doom Patroller Changeling-nee-Beast-Boy, were joined by new members Cyborg, Starfire, and Raven. Balancing character interaction (including the occasional issue devoted entirely to the comparatively mudane goings-on in the heroes' personal lives) with fast-paced adventure storylines, the creators have made the new series DC's top-selling and most-talked-about title. This in turn undoubtedly motivated the DC brass to produce more super-team books, whether all-new or revivals of previous concepts.

First of these was Roy Thomas's pseudo-revival of the Justice Society of America in **All-Star Squadron**. Taking comics' first super-team back to their "roots" in the 1940s world of World War II, Thomas avoided the overuse of those JSA members who have JLA counterparts with

whom they could easily become confused. He created a new "second team" of JSA-affiliated homefront heroes, much as the Liberty Legion characters he reintroduced at Marvel had been an arm of the Invaders team. Beginning on the eve of the Pearl Harbor attack, the unfortunately-initialed series details the organization of little-known, overlooked and second-string heroes and heroines (along with the occasional semi-new character, such as the female Firebrand, and Quality Comics characters said to inhabit more than one parallel world, such as Plastic Man and Phantom Lady) under President Roosevelt, into a super-team which can be called upon while the JSA members are off in the front lines. It should be noted that Thomas's starting lineup bore a startling resemblance to the aforementioned Liberty Legion in its choice of featured players, including a romance-of-sorts between super-speedster Johnny Quick (Whizzer) and patriotic heroine Liberty Belle (Miss America), a malleable-bodied hero in Plastic Man (Thin Man), a metallic strongman in Robotman (Blue Diamond), and a flying winged champion in Hawkman (Red Raven). New members have been added and other have left for varying periods of time throughout the series thus far. More recent issues have seen the dissolution of the supposed JSA "core" of Hawkman, Atom, and Dr. Mid-nite, while the Seven Soldiers' Shining Knight, Gerry Conway's creation Steel, and Hawkman's partner Hawkgirl have taken more active roles. (This is written prior to the recent major reintroduction of the JSA into the storyline.—Ed.)

The second new DC super-team is also of Roy Thomas's creation. **Captain Carrot and his Amazing Zoo Crew**, as one might guess, involves a sextet of super-powered "funny animal" characters in tongue-in-cheek adventures on yet another of DC's patented parallel worlds, this one inhabited by every DC cartoon character ever published. Leader Capt. Carrot is really cartoonist Roger Rodney Rabbit, responsible for his world's version of the JLA comic, which on Earth-C (for Cartoon?) is known as the Just 'a Lotta Animals; the super-strong Pig-Iron is actually former DC headliner Peter Porkchops in a transformed state; magician Ally-Kat-Abra is martial arts instructress Felina Furr; magnetically-powered Yankee Poodle is gossip columnist (er, that is, "celebrity interviewer") Rova Barkitt; Rubberduck (whose name is self-explanatory) is movie star Byrd Rentals; and Fastback, a speedy tortoise, is country boy Timmy Joe Terrapin. The puns on real peoples' and institutions' names evident in those of the characters correctly indicate the prevalent tone of the series, in which everyone and everything has a name which is an animal version of an Earth-Prime label. The series possesses the ideal artist in Scott Shaw, who is scheduled to take over the writing chores from the otherwise-occupied Thomas, as well. While the book's unique blend of fancy and super-doing might not be everyone's cup of tea, at least one advantage the series has is that most of its characters' voices are memorable, if only for thier association with those of other characters. Yankee Poodle really does talk like you-know-who, Fastback's inflections are those

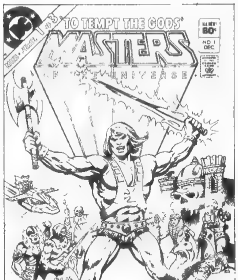
AND SO, THE COSTUMED CRITTERS SWING INTO ACTION...
NOW, WE'RE PREPARED FOR HIS LOW-TEMPERATURE TRICKS.
YOU KNOW IT, ABRA.
SWIP
SWIP
SWIP

of Hanne-Barbera's Huckleberry Hound, etc. (When was the last time you thought of someone as sounding like, say, Green Lantern?)

Speaking of GL, Superman, he and the New Teen Titans share the honors for launching what will, at this writing, soon become the third new DC super-team title of the decade. The Omega Men, a band of alien freedom fighters (shades of the Micronauts and the Guardians of the Galaxy) from the Vegan system which also spawned the Titans' Starfire, first appeared in **Green Lantern** as a

TO AVENGE A HANGFUL OF DEATHS--I CAUSED THOUSANDS MORE!
IT--IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE I HAD A CHOICE-- BUT HOW CAN I GO ON LIVING-- KNOWING THE SLAUGHTER I UNLEASHED?
NOT JUST SOLDIERS-- BUT OLD PEOPLE-- WOMEN-- KIDS--
21
© 1983 DC Comics

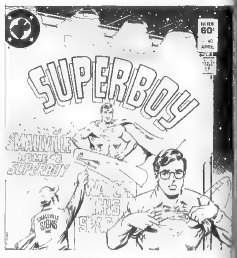
"hidden race" of super-beings in the tradition of Marvel's Inhumans. From there, they went on to simultaneously guest-star in two other series written by their creator Marv Wolfman, **Action Comics** (in the Superman Strip) and **New Teen Titans**. Be-



sides the members listed at the end of this article, according to the latest DC news, the Omega Men boast about 100 members all told, making them the new champions in the Most Populous Super-Team Sweepstakes.

Honorary super-team status, at least, should also be conferred upon DC's first 80s entry in the toy-derived characters marathon: the Masters of the Universe. Appearing in a guest-shot in **DC Comics Presents**, a preview insert in virtually every DC title, and finally in a seperate mini-series, these characters inhabit Eternia, a world not unlike that of Kirby's New Gods but on a more simplistic plane of storytelling. There, Prince Adam borrows a leaf from Clark Kent's book by playing a buffoon while secretly maintaining a double identity as the heroic but oddly-named He-Man (together with his cowardly pet, Cringer, who becomes the courageous Battle Cat). He-Man's supporting cast includes Teela, female commander of the king's guard, Man-at-Arms, Prince Adams's combat instructor and the Metron-like Stratos -- all of whom join the battle against the insidious Skeletor, who, naturally, resembles a living skeleton.

At this point, another error needs correcting, if only in omission. After consideration, ye author had intended to omit Harvey's Tiger Boy and Company from this series of articles. I felt that if a character who turns into various heroes may be included as a one-man super-team, including Tiger Boy obligates yours truly to include DC's Robby Reed, and later Christopher King and Victoria Grant, all of "Dial H for Hero" fame. The Tiger Boy portion of the "Other Companies" Teams of the 60's article somehow snuck into print despite the writer's intentions. Nevertheless, we will leave Robby Reed (who has, it seems to me, been amply covered elsewhere) and Chris and Vicki (who are impossible to keep abreast of, given that they are still turning into several fan-created super-doers a month in **Superboy**) for another place and another time.



III. THE OTHER COMPANIES' TEAMS

For the first time since the late 1960's, there are super-team comics being published by companies other than Marvel and DC once again, and if the current popularity of the team series is any indication of trends, there will be more in the near future.

While a case could be made that the Galactic Rangers of Jack Kirby's **Captain Victory** series for Pacific Comics constitute a super-team of

©1982 Jack Kirby

sorts, your author prefers to consider them merely an associated band of "ordinary people" (for all their bizarre appearances and alien abilities) in the tradition of such ensemble comics as "War of the Worlds/Killraven" and **Master of Kung Fu**. When First Comics' **Warp** has had time to develop, it may turn into yet another sort-of super-team book. For the present, though, the extent of "other" teams for the 80's are but two.

First, there is the single-handed creation of Larry Houston, the Vanguards. This unique all-female team (not counting Marvel's short-lived Lady Liberators in **Avengers** and a couple of issues with an all-femal Defenders lineup) is actually the top battle unit of the rebel Alphaforce, an alliance of worlds against an extra-galactic solar-system-wide tyranny. Celestra, Corona, and Cerebra share only one issue of the now-defunct try-out title, **Charlton Bullseye**, but may yet reappear.

The second new-company team also find themselves battling a planetary evil force on an alien world. Published by Noble Comics, the heroes of **The Justice Machine**, formerly "regular" super-heroes like the JLA and Avengers, return from a mission to learn that they've been branded traitors in their absence. Thus, like DC's Freedom Fighters before them, the JM stalwarts are caught between the devil and the deep in their 1984-future world of [of course] Georwell. As in the early issues of Marvel's new X-Men series, all the powers and backgrounds of the Justice Machine members are only slowly being revealed to the readers at this point. Fortunately, the planned frequency of publication is such that we may know a lot more about Challenger, Blazer, Titan, Demon, Talisman, and Diviner before too long. (NOTE: Since this series was concluded, various additionalteams have been announced by Marvel and DC, as well as by numerous smaller companies including Red Circle.)

IV. MEMBERSHIP

[Note: Due to the recurring tendency for Micronauts to leave the team and then return, and die and be brought back to life, such statistics are being omitted from this list, as they will undoubtedly be outdated before publication.]

1. Space Glider [Comander Arcturus Rann] Also reincarnated as TIME TRAVELER by the Enigma Force.
2. Marionette [Princess Mari]
3. Biotron
4. Microtron
5. Bug [Galactic Warrior]

© 1983 Marvel Comics Group

6. Acroyear
7. Jasmine [Bug's girlfriend]
8. Cilicia [Acroyear's girlfriend]
9. Fireflyte
10. Devil
11. Nanotron [Microtron's girlfrien
12. Prince Pharoid

THE RANGERS
Founded: **Hulk #265**

1. Red Wolf [Will Talltrees]
2. Night Rider [Hamilton Slade]
3. Firebird [Bonita Juarez]
4. Texas Twister [Drew Daniels]
5. Shooting Star [Victoria Star]

ALPHA FLIGHT
Founded: **X-Men #120**

1. Vindicator (James McDonald Hudson)
2. Northstar (Jeane-Paul Beaubier)
3. Shaman (Dr. Michael Twoyoungmen)
4. Snowbird (Cpl. Anne McKenzie, RCMP)
5. Sasquatch (Dr. Walter Langkowski)
6. Aurora (Jeanne-Marie Beaubier)

THE SQUADRON SUPREME
Founded: **Avengers #85**

1. Hyperion (Mark Milton)
2. Nighthawk (Kyle Richmond)
3. Whizzer
4. Dr. Spectrum
5. Amphibion
6. Tom Thumb
7. American Eagle/Cap'n Hawk
8. Hawkeye/Golden Archer
9. Lady Lark
10. Power Princess
11. Arcanna
12. Nuke

THE ALL-STAR SQUADRON
Founded: **All-Star Squadron #1**

1. Hawkman (Carter Hall)
   see also Justice Society
2. The Atom (Al Pratt)
   see also Justice Society
3. Dr. Mid-Nite (Charles McNider)
   see also Justice Society
4. Johnny Quick (Johnny Chambers)
5. Liberty Belle (Libby Lawrence)
6. Robotman (Robert Crane, Paul Dennis)
7. Plastic Man ("Eel" O'Brian)
8. The Shining Knight (Sir Justin, Justin Arthur)
   See also Seven Soldiers of Victory
9. Firebrand II (Danette Reilly)
10. Hawkgirl (Shiera Sanders)
11. Steel (Hank Heywood; becomes Comander Steel)
12. Wonder Woman (Princess Diana, Diana Prince)
    see also Justice Society

WE JUST FOUGHT M AND HIS SNOWBIRD HENCHMEN THIS AFTERNOON, WHEN THEY TRIED TO LOOT THE CROWDS AT THE FOLLYWOOD BOWL.
NOT ONLY THAT, BUT THEY DANG-NEAR RUINED TH' BOB HOOPOE SHOW!
HEY, THOSE TICKETS WERE HARD TO GET!
NOW, THAT IS FIENDISH!
WELL, AT LEAST WE ALL KNOW WHOS BEHIND THIS--
© 1985 DC COMICS

CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS AMAZING ZOO CREW
Founded: **Capt. Carrot #1**

1. Captain Carrot (Roger Rodney Rabbit)
2. Yankee Poodle (Rova Barkitt)
3. Pig-Iron (Peter Porkchops)
4. Fastback (Timmy Joe Terrapin)
5. Rubberduck (Byrd Rentals)
6. Alley-Kat-Abra (Felina Furr)

NIMBUS

THE OMEGA MEN
Founded: **Green Lantern #141**

KALISTA

© 1982 DC Comics

1. Primus
2. Kalista
3. Nimbus
4. Harpis
5. Broot
6. Tigorr
7. Demonia
8. Auron

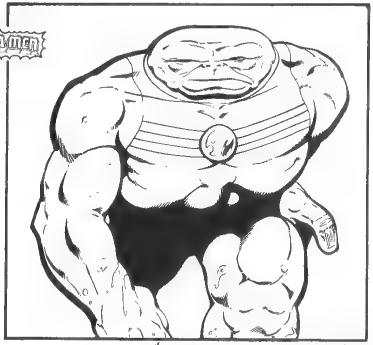
TIGORR

© 1982 DC Comics

PRIMUS

© 1982 DC Comics

BROOT



© 1982 DC Comics

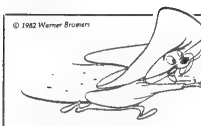
THE VANGUARDS
Founded: **Charlton Bullseye #4**

1. Celestra
2. Corona
3. Cerebra

THE JUSTICE MACHINE
Founded: **Justice Machine #1**

1. Challenger
2. Blazer
3. Titan
4. Demon
5. Talisman
6. Diviner

© 1982 Warner Brothers



Animated Antics

by Jim Korkis

© 1982 Kenny Hicks Studios

SAVIORS OF THE LOST ART: THE DISNEY ARCHIVES AND ASIFA'S SEARCH AND RESCUE

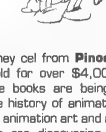
by Jim Korkis

Animation has always been an Art but until fairly recently it hasn't been treated like an Art.

"None of us thought of what we were doing as art," stated famed Disney animator and teacher Frank Thomas, "Most of those men were far better artists then we realized at the time, but the form in which they were working was held in low esteem."

Animators gave little importance to the finished cels and drawings because they weren't the finished product; the completed film was the main goal and the tools were only important in the sense that they helped the animators reach that goal. Cels and drawings were thrown away at the end of a film. During the filming of Disney's **Fantasia**, after a scene was filmed, several animators used the cels as a makeshift slip-and-slide for their amusement. Warner Brothers and MGM burned their entire inventory of animation artwork in order to make more storage room for other items.

Animation art that was saved didn't always survive. Some cels were made of nitrate cellulose which can buckle and curl or even disintegrate. Paint can flake off or crack. Disney tried to save as much as he could but sometimes the stuff that was saved was stored under leaking water pipes.



A Disney cel from **Pinocchio** recently sold for over $4,000; more and more books are being written about the history of animation. Both buyers of animation art and animation historians are discovering that the material they want and need may no longer exist. Some animators, like Bob Clampett, have small private collections which researchers have used and several original art sellers have added cels to their catalogs. However, despite these attempts and the attempts of a few libraries like UCLA to try and preserve animation history, material still remains unavailable or is unwittingly destroyed. There are two organizations devoted to the preservation of animation artwork and history and their facilities are available to everyone.

THE DISNEY ARCHIVES

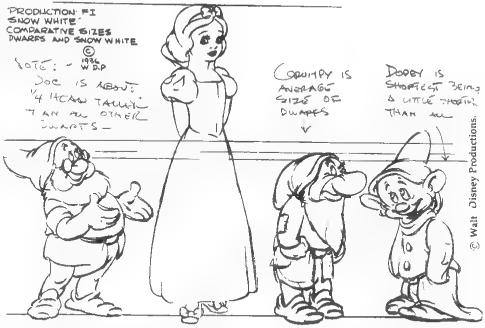
In the summer of 1969, the UCLA Library contacted the Disney Studio about the possibility of the deposit of Walt Disney's personal papers in the Library's Department of Special Collections, but it became obvious that such an arrangement would not work. First, there would be the difficulty of access to the papers by people from the Studio and second, it was difficult to divorce the personal papers from the ones that concerned the business of the Studio.

At this time, Dave Smith was the reference librarian in the University Research Library at UCLA. Two years earlier, Smith had worked at the Studio compiling a Disney bibliography of over 3,200 entries. Because of this knowledge of the company, Smith was asked to study the possibilities of creating a Walt Disney Archives which would house material on all parts of the organization.

Smith visited the Disney Studio, finding some important old files stored under leaking water pipes. Other files were discovered that had been visited by termites; termites liked the graphite lines on early drawings, for they would eat only the lines, leaving nicely etched pieces of paper.

Smith also spent time visiting other established company archives like the ones for Borden, Texaco, and Bristol-Meyers. He also visited Truman Library in Missouri as it was becoming apparent the Disney Ar-

hives needed to be designed more along the lines of presidental libraries than a regular company archive. A proposal for an Archives was submitted to the Studio January 1st, 1970 and by June it was decided to go ahead with the program as proposed. Dave Smith was hired as the archivist and operations were set up temporarily in the anterooms of Walt Disney's office suite at the Disney Studio in Burbank. In 1976, the Archives moved into its present quarters in the Roy O. Disney Building at the Disney Studio. It occupies space on two floors, and features a reading room, listening rooms, office, workroom, and storage area. The storeroom has temperature and humidity controls for the preservation of historical material.


PRODUCTION #1
SNOW WHITE
COMPARATIVE SIZES
DWARFS AND SNOW WHITE
© 1936 WDP
NOTE: -
DOC IS ABOUT ½ INCH TALLER THAN ALL OTHER DWARFS—
GRUMPY IS AVERAGE SIZE OF DWARFS
DOPEY IS SHORTEST BEING A LITTLE SHORTER THAN ALL
© Walt Disney Productions.

As Walt Disney Productions neared its 50th anniversary in 1973, it was obvious that the Studio needed a well-indexed collection of the company's records and products not just for the internal needs of the Studio but also because the Studio was receiving more and more requests from writers and the general public for research and information concerning the history of the company. Disney has always been highly public relations conscious and the establishment of the Archives handles all those requests as welll as correcting faulty information.

The Archives is open to all Disney employees and by advance appointment to qualified students, writers and other members of the public working on specific projects. Smith is well aware of the world of fanzines and the Archives house complete sets of such Disney oriented zines as **The Duckburg Times** and **The Barks Collector** as well as many foreign fanzines.

What is in the Archives for use in researching articles?

The Archives has all of Walt Disney's office correspondence files from 1930 until his death in 1966. [They also have some earlier files that date back to the Laugh-O-Gram Studio in Kansas City in 1922.] The collection includes gifts to Walt Disney, personal memorabilia, recordings and transcripts of speeches, awards, over 8,000 photographs of Walt Disney, and a large collection of miniatures which Walt Gathered throughout the world.

The also have a complete collection of domestic Disney comic books and magazines, along with most of the foreign ones. They have practically a complete collection of the phonograph records put out by the Walt Disney Company as well as a representative collection of Disney songs from other recording companies and sheet music. The Archives houses publicity material. [Walt Disney Productions has had a clipping service since 1924 and a half century of these clippings are cataloged and filed for use.] The Archives also contains an excellent sample collection for post-1950 character merchandise, with representative pieces of earlier items. [Catalogs, correspondence files, photographs, and contracts help in the identifiction of these and items not included in the collection.]. Production files are available for all Disney films as well as menus, souvenir merchandise, employee publications, and similar items from the theme parks.

Taped interviews have been held with many key Disney employees including Walt and Roy Disney. Typed manuscripts are available of most of these interviews. The Archives also has a few interesting props and costumes like Annette Funicello's Mouseketter outfit, a diving helmet from **20,000 Leagues Under The Sea** and the ornate books used in the opening scenes of **Snow White** and **Sleeping Beauty**.

Most of the original artwork, from **Steamboat Willie** to the current animated features, is stored in the Archives in order to preserve the art in atmospherically controlled conditions.

The Archives also has a number of special indexes, catalogs, and files to aid researchers. Within the past decade,, the Archives has developed an outstanding reputation and the sudden influx of Disney oriented books can be traced to the fact that the Archives has made the material more readily accessible to writers. For additional information about the materials available or to make use of the facilities, contact: David R. Smith, Archivist, Walt Disney Archives, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, California 91521.

STEAMBOAT WILLIE (1928) © Walt Disney Productions

ASIFA'S SEARCH AND RESCUE

It all began in 1957 in a pretty little resort town in France named Annecy.

A group of animators from all over the world gathered to plan and promote an internation animation festival that was being created to rival the huge live-action film festival held yearly at Cannes. While they were at it, they formed a professional organizationcalled "L'**A**ssocation **I**nternationale du **F**ilm D'**A**nimation" [ASIFA]. A few years later, the group was chartered by UNESCO as an internation cultural organization.

Today there are nearly fifty chapters of ASIFA in 33 countries. [Four of the most active chapters are in the U.S.] The chapters are autonomous in their organization although international decisions are made annually at a meeting held in conjuntion with one of the major ASIFA animation festivals.

ASIFA-Hollywood is the biggest, most active chapter in the world and is responsible for the **Annie** Awards which are given each year to distinguished members of the animation community. The group is also involved in many other activities from the publication of a bi-monthly magazine-newsletter to the coordination of the Adopt-A-School program where an animation company helps out a school with an animation course.

A fairly recent addition to ASIFA-Hollywood's activities is its Search and Rescue operation, which maintains what may be the world's most complete facility for the authentication, repair, and restoration of animation artwork, dating from the earliest days of animation production. Many major studios, collectors, museums and even the U.S. Patent Office have made use of this service. In charge of this service is Ron Stark. **Comics Feature** took advantage of an opportunity to speak with Stark.

Comics Feature: What is the Search and Rescue Team?

Stark: The team is a select group of members of the International Animated Film Society [ASIFA-Hollywood] who donate their time and talents to a project whose focus is the acquisition, repair, and restoration of all types of animation artwork.

Comics Feature: Who may use the service?

Stark: Anyone. Search and Rescue service is available to studios, museums, galleries, dealers, and individuals whose artwork requires professionally applied restoration techniques in order to maintain or regain its appearance and value.

Comics Feature: Will restoration affect the value of the artwork?

Stark: The primary factors determining the value of a specific piece of animation artwork are its intrinsic artistic worth, its rarity, and its condition. In many cases the value of a piece of artwork can be enhanced by returning it to its original appearance, but a general statement cannot be made which will apply to all cases.

Comics Feature: How long does the service take?

Stark: From six to ten weeks depending on the amount of work required.

Comics Feature: What kind of paint is used?

Stark: Paints are compounded to conform as closely as possible to the original formula used. Colors are mixed and prepared on an individual basis for each request. In this, ASIFA-Hollywood receives assistance from chemists and colormen all over the country.

Comics Feature: Can a torn cel be repaired?

Stark: Although cel-patching techniques are becoming more efficient, at this time they are not applicable to any but small tears, to prevent further damage.

Comics Feature: How can I tell if my artwork is authentic?

Stark: For a small charge, Search and Rescue will attempt to authenticate your artwork. Many of ASIFA's members are animation historians and archivists and participate in the project to ensure as accurate and evaluation as possible.

Comics Feature: Can you locate any type of artwork?

Stark: We can certainly try. ASIFA is an international organization with chapters in 33 countries. Though our chapters in 33 countries. Through our members here and abroad we are usually successful in finding the item you're looking for.

Comics Feature: How much does it cost?

Stark: The cost depends on the amount of work required, but it is always minimal. In the case of restoration, there is a small set-up fee to cover postage, handling, and processing. In addition, we charge the person only for materials used on a cost-or-repacement basis. When locating artwork, we charge a fee to cover the cost of postage, telephone, etc. Labor is donated by members of ASIFA-Hollywood.

Comics Feature: How does someone begin to use this service?

Stark: Write to us and tell us how we can help. Describe your artwork as completely as you can, and tell us what condition it's in. Please do not send your artwork until we have corresponded with you. We will require a Work Order and some other basic information. After we receive your letter, we will instruct you what to do.

Comics Feature: Where should people write for more information?

Stark: Ron Stark, S/R Project
ASIFA-Hollywood
1258 No. Highland Ave.
Suite 102
Hollywood, CA 90038

STRIP TEASE

Rick Norwood

NORWOOD'S GUIDE TO COMIC STRIP PRICES

Before I get on with the first part of the price guide we have some old business to take care of. I've moved. My new address is: Box 1762, Wayne, N.J. 07470

The Hulk comic strip, which [as I mentioned in a previous column] I thought had gone under, is still afloat in, among other papers, the **Seattle Post-Intelligencer.** It is signed Alan Kupperberg. Presumably he is doing both story and art.

The latest issue of **Strip Scene** is out. This is a number one comic strip fanzine, and rallying place for comic strip fans and collectors. Strip fans can only get by with a little help from their friends: to help find that missing strip, to trade with, to write protest letters when your newspaper cancels your favorite strip, or just to chat. The current issue [#20] features a beautifully illustrated article on Prince Valiant, Act Nine of Bob Bindig's **On Stage** checklist, letters, reprints of rare strips and lots of ads. Just $8 for four issues, from Remuda Publishing, 6312 Crowchild Trail S.W., Calgary, Alberta, CANADA T3E 5R5. Get it.

Now, I have a few things to say on the subject of Price Guides.

First, all price guides are folly. The **Heisenberg Uncertainty Principal** states that no scientific measurment can be exact, because the act of measuring changes the object measured. That goes double for price guides. By publishing a price guide you change the asking price.

Second point: I have seen kids follow, in each year's **Over Priced Street Guide to Comic Books**, the price of **Spiderman #158**, which they bought for 45 cents and now see listed at $1.80. I have bad news for them. When they try to sell that $1.80 comic back to a dealer, they will be lucky if he pays them the 45 cents they paid him for it. Collect out of love, not to get rich. You'll be happier, and more likely to get rich, if you do.

Third point: what do I know? I've been collecting and buying and selling comic strips for twenty years now and what follows is still just my best guess. Buy for what you can afford and sell for what you can get.

Why then am I publishing a guide at all? Because there wasn't one, and people want some sort of idea what the going price is. Actually, there is one existing guide, contained in a bookstore paperback on comic prices. It has listings like: 23 daily **Gasoline Alley** back to back with **Mutt and Jeff**, Oct. 1943 – 89–. In other words, the author just copied someone's for sale list [probably Claude Held's]. Useless and stupid.

I guess the main reason for a guide [The reason I happily buy the Overstreet guide every year, is for the other useful information it contains, apart from the prices. I have tried to do that, too. Unless I was really sure though, I follow the data by a [?] or omit it entirely. I use no data from the various erroneous "encyclopedias" in circulation. Wrong data is worse than none at all.

Comic strip collectors are a small, friendly fraternity. We enjoy reading the strips, enjoy the thrill of filling a gap in a run, and enjoy helping another collector find the strips he is looking for. We spend far more time on the hobby than monetary motives could explain. When you buy a strip, remember that you are buying the collector's time more than the piece of paper the strip is printed on.

Unlike comic books, the first strip of a title usually does not command a premium price [with a few major exceptions noted in the guide.] Most collectors will not collect a strip unless it is the right format, full color, nice condition, and full margins. Any defect will reduce the price by at least half. Reprints are usually considered as good or better than clipped strips, provided they exactly reproduce the newspaper version. Thus, the price for a **Menomonee Falls Gazette** reprint of a week of Murphy Anderson's daily **Buck Rogers** is about the same as the price for that week clipped from a daily paper. Strips trimmed to the edge of the panels or pasted into books are worth very little.

The prices in this guide are in every case for a single strip, but, especially in the case of daily strips, you probably are not going to find a buyer unless you have a substantial complete run. Do not expect a dealer to break up a run to sell you the strip you need. Buy the run, take what you need, up grade your own run, and sell or trade what is left.

An ad listing strips or pages almost always means cut out of newspaper. The technical term is "tear sheet". Original art is the actual board and ink which the artist created, and sells for about 100 times what a tear sheet sells for.

For the terminology of the various formats, see my last column.

Where a price range is given, earlier strips sell for the higher price.

Akwas [Mike Roy - Sunday only/June 7, 1964 - Mar. 28, 1965]
Indian adventure

half page.....$1.00	
tab	.75
third	.50

Alley Oop [V.T. Hamlin - Sunday and daily/Aug. 7, 1933 to date. The last Hamlin Sunday was Apr. 1, 1973.]
Caveman and s-f, humorous adventure
Note: The Sunday page began circa Sept. 9, 1934. On July 15, 1966 Hamlin's assistant Dave Graue began to sign the daily along with Hamlin, and later took over the strip.

full page	5.00 - 3.00
half or tab	1.00 - .50
⅓ or ⅛ tab	.35
Dave Graue:	
half	.25
third or	
half tab	.15
Hamlin daily	.20 - .10
Hamlin &	
Graue	.08
Graue daily	.03

Amazing Spider-Man ["Stan Lee" art by John Romita, later by Fred Kida Sunday and daily/Jan. 3, 1977 to date. Note: There was an earlier, unsold version of the Spider-Man strip. Five sample strips appear in Marvel Tales #81.]

half page	.50
tab	.40
third or	
⅛ tab	.25
quarter	.10
daily	.05

NOTE HOW THE UNFLAPPABLE RESIDENTS OF FUN CITY--
--ENCOUNTER THE UNEXPECTED WITH THEIR USUAL NUMB APLOMB!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
RELAX, CHARLIE. EVEN A FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-MAN HAS TO KEEP UP WITH CURRENT EVENTS.

B.C. [Johnny Hart - Sunday and daily/ circa 1958 to date. The Sunday strip began Oct. 19, 1958, the daily at least seven months earlier.]

caveman humor

half page	.50 - .35
tab, ⅓ tab or ¼	.35 - .15
third	.25 - .10
daily	.10 - .03

"A bright star shone outside the castle window and the Prince's Fairy Godmother appeared . . ."
Right out of the book! A beautiful Fairy Godmother!
Cushlamochree! Broke my magic wand! You wished for a Godparent who could grant wishes?
Lucky boy! Your wish is granted! I'm your Fairy Godfather.

Barnaby [Crockett Johnson - daily only/April 1942 - 1954. The strip was revived briefly, retelling the 1942 stories but with new art, circa 1960.]

fantasy humor

daily	.20
1960's daily	.10

Batman ["Bob Kane" Some art by Carmine Infantino, some by Al Plastino. Some scripts by E. Nelson Bridwell. The Sunday strip ended circa 1969. Sunday and daily/May 29, 1966 - 1972 [?].]

costume hero adventure

half page	.50
tab	.40
third	.30
daily	.08

Batman and Robin ["Bob Kane" Some scripts were by Jack Schiff. Sunday and daily/Nov. 1, 1943 - late 1947]

costume hero adventure

half or tab	1.00
third or ⅓ tab	.75
comic book reprint	.25
daily	.10

BATMAN AND ROBIN

By Bob Kane

WHO ARE THEY?
THIS IS BRUCE WAYNE, WHO POSES AS A SOCIETY PLAYBOY . .
I'M SO SORRY MRS. VANGILD BUT I'M REALLY TOO TIRED TO ATTEND THE DANCE TONIGHT! THE WEATHER, YOU KNOW!
NO, THIS IS HIS YOUNG WARD, DICK GRAYSON...
GOSH, BRUCE ALMOST HAS EVEN ME FOOLED WITH THAT ACT OF HIS!
FOR THAT INDOLENT ATTITUDE ONLY SERVES AS A DISGUISE FOR THAT NEMESIS OF CRIME, WHO, WITH HIS DARING YOUNG AIDE, FORMS THE DYNAMIC TEAM OF...
BATMAN!
AND ROBIN!

Ben Casey [Neal Adams - Sunday and daily/Nov. 26, '62 - July 31, '66. Adams did all of the art and wrote some of the stories. The Sunday strip did not begin until Sept. 20, 1964.]

medical soap opera

half page	1.00
tab or third	.75
daily	.15

Best Seller Showcase: The Sword of Shannara [S&d/Feb. 13, '78 - Apr. 9,-'78. Best Seller Showcase was a short lived and spectacularly unsuccessful strip which adapted several novels, including **Raise the Titanic.** Art was alternately by Frank Bolle and Gray Morrow. The only story adapted which is much sought after by collectors is this adaptation of the Terry Brooks novel, illustrated by Gray Morrow.]

half page	.75
third	.50
quarter or tab	.25
daily	.20

Beyond Mars [story by Jack Williamson/Sunday only/Feb. 17, '52-May 13, '55. Art by Lee Elias.]

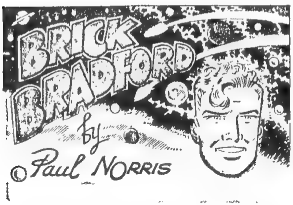
s-f adventure

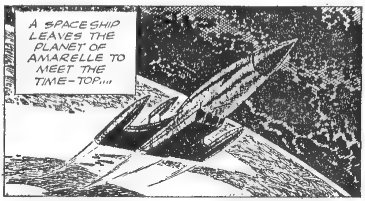
tab or ½ tab	1.00

[only format]

BEYOND MARS
by
JACK WILLIAMSON
LEE ELIAS
WH--YOU'RE BECKY'S DAD!!
THAT'S RIGHT--I'M POLICE INSPECTOR STARKE---
I'VE JUST MADE YOU IMMUNE TO STAR DUST! YOU SEE, I'VE GOT COBRA'S ANTIDOTE!
MIKE!! COBRA'S SENDING HER DUSTIES TO WRECK YOUR SHIP!!
MIKE OUTLINES A PLAN OF ACTION---
---AND IF I'M RIGHT ABOUT DUSTIES, ALL WE GOTTA DO IS---
YOU'RE RIGHT---THEY'RE JUST ZOMBIES!
BUT IT LOOKS AS IF WE'RE IN FOR TROUBLE WITH LUKOR!

STRIPS





Brick Bradford [art by Clarence Gray/S&d/circa 1930 to date. Later art by Paul Norris. Stories by William Ritt and others. This began as an adventure strip but soon turned to science fiction.]

s-f adventure

tab	1.00 - .35
half	.75 - .35
third	.35 - .20
daily	.10 - .03

Buck Rogers [Philip Nowland/S&d/Dec. 21, '28 - July 8, '67; Sept. 9, '79 - date. The Sunday strip did not begin until Apr. 6, 1930, and ended [Until its recent revival] June 13, 1965. Philip Nowland created the strip and wrote it until his death in 1940, after which the strip had several writers, including Dick Calkins, Rick Yager, Bob Barton, Fritz Leiber, and, after its revival, Jim Lawrence and Cary Bates. The first 183 Sunday pages were ghosted by Russell Keaton. After that the Sunday strip was signed "Dick Calkins" but is supposedly by Rick Yager until 1958, when, after a brief run of Murphy Anderson strips, George Tusca took over. After the hiatus, art was by Gray Morrow and then by Jack Sparling. Many artists have drawn the daily, which was numbered in several complicated series before it was dated. Daily artists include long runs by Dick Calkins, Rick Yager, and George Tusca, short runs by Murphy Anderson, Leonard Dworkins, Morrow and Sparling. For complete information on numbers and artists, see my articles in the Menomonee Falls Gazette and in Comic Reader [to appear].]

s-f adventure

full page #1	50.00
full pages	20.00 - 5.00
half or tab	5.00 - 1.00
third or ⅓ tab numbered	1.00 - .35
daily	.20
Yager daily	.20 - .10
Anderson daily	.08
Tusca daily	.08
revival daily	.08

BUCK ROGERS: 1931

AT THE MARTIAN SPACE GLOBE'S TYPE OMNIGRAD-I BROADCAST A WARNING!
DON'T DARE SEND IT IN CODE, MOUSE, QUERIONS! ANY MARTIAN INTERCEPTING THAT MESSAGE WILL THINK WE'RE PLANNING A SURPRISE INTER-PLANET TRADE BROADCAST!
NOW THE PLASTIC PATCH IS HOT!
WHEW! I ONLY HOPE EARTH UNDERSTANDS IT! JOHN PHILLIPS/DICK CALKINS FOR THE NEA!
WHO'D THAT FAT THEY POOR THING WITH THE BOOB'S HOT WITH MY FACE / WHAT A FOOL I WAS!
JUST A MINUTE! KEEP YOUR SHIRT ON!

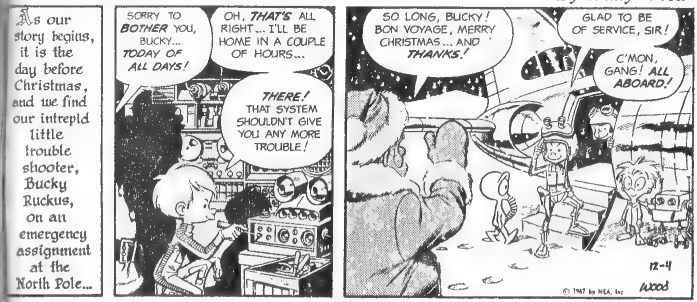
WITH NYYT TELEPATHICALLY DIRECTING HER, WILMA HAS PILOTED HER SPACECRAFT THROUGH A DIMENSIONAL RIFT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM...
...WHICH ACTS AS A "GATEWAY" TO ANOTHER GALAXY AND A SMALL PLANET!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND, NYYT! IF THIS IS YOUR HOME...
...WHY AREN'T THERE OTHERS LIKE YOU TO GREET US?
MEANWHILE, STARLAG AND AN ALIEN WARSHIP RACE TO FOLLOW WILMA AND NYYT INTO THE RIFT...
OUR COMPETITORS HAVE A PROBLEM, DOC!
THEY APPEAR TO BE OUT OF CONTROL!
NO WAY THEY'LL MAKE IT THROUGH IN ONE PIECE!

Bucky's Christmas Caper [Wally Wood/daily only/Dec. 4, 1967 - Dec. 23, 1967. Note: Each year NEA and other syndicates offer a Christmas strip, which usually runs for three weeks just before Christmas. There is a Walt Disney Christmas story, which may be of interest to Disney collectors, but the only other Christmas strips of special interest that I know of are this Wally Wood story and "Why Christmas Almost Wasn't" by Jack Kent (1968).]

Fantasy Humor
daily .35

BUCKY'S CHRISTMAS CAPER

By Wally Wood


As our story begins, it is the day before Christmas, and we find our intrepid little trouble shooter, Bucky Ruckus, on an emergency assignment at the North Pole...
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUCKY... TODAY OF ALL DAYS!
OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT... I'LL BE HOME IN A COUPLE OF HOURS...
THERE! THAT SYSTEM SHOULDN'T GIVE YOU ANY MORE TROUBLE!
SO LONG, BUCKY! BON VOYAGE, MERRY CHRISTMAS... AND THANKS!
GLAD TO BE OF SERVICE, SIR!
C'MON, GANG! ALL ABOARD!
12-4
Wood
© 1967 by NEA, Inc.

STRIPS

Bullwinkle
By Al Kilgore
IT CAN'T BE A HARP, CAPTAIN, IT HAS LEGS!
A WALKING, TALKING PIANO?
HELLO OUT THERE! I ARE A MOOSE! WHAT THE--
THAT VOICE!! MATEY, GIVE ME A HAND WITH THIS COWERN!
PRRRRIP!
CAPTAIN PEACHFUZZ!
BULLWINKLE!!
SAVE THAT WRAPPING IT MAY BE VALUABLE FOR PRIZES!!

Bullwinkle (Al Kilgore/daily only/ 1962-1965 [?])

humor

daily	.35

Buz Sawyer (Roy Crane/Sunday and daily/Nov. 1, 1943 to date. Note: Except for a handful of pages, the Sunday strip is ghosted. The ghosted strips are humor and Buz Sawyer does not appear in them. The strips by Crane are usually adventure and usually feature Buz. Crane also used ghosts on the daily strip, but not so heavily. He wrote the daily until the early 1960's, and drew it except for some strips which he did not sign. Circa 1960 he turned most of the art chores over to Harry Schlensker and the script to Ed Granberry, under his guidance. When Crane died in the 1970's, these two began to sign the strip. One June 3, 1982, John Celardo replaced Schlensker on the artwork. The Sunday was discontinued in the 1970s.)

adventure

Half by Crane	1.00
tab or third by Crane	.50
not by Crane	.10
daily by Crane	.20-.10
daily signed by Crane	.10
other daily	.03

There are, of course, many other strips beginning with A or B. The strips listed are the ones I am most familiar with, which I have seen advertised, and which I have had the most requests for over the years. Many other strips are collected by someone. I often think there is somewhere a collector for every strip, but they can be hard to find when you have the strips for sale. **Barney Baxter** and **Bringing Up Father** come to mind as strips which are collectied but which I have no special knowledge of. On the other hand, even very popular strips like **Blondie** and **Beetle Baily** may be rarely collected. As a rule of thumb, for strips I do not know much about, I ask $1 for a full page, 50- for a half page, 30- for a third or half tab, 10- for a quarter, and 3- for a daily. Keep in mind, however, that I am not ruling out the possibility of some fabulously valuable, much collected strip which I forgot or have never heard of.

To Be continued

BUZ SAWYER — By Roy Crane

INSIDE ZORKA'S PALACE, BUZ IS ESCORTED THRU A LABYRINTH OF SUMPTUOUS ROOMS.
FINALLY HE'S SEATED... INFORMED THAT ZORKA WILL SEE HIM PRESENTLY.
HE WAITS... FIVE MINUTES... TEN... FIFTEEN... WHEN SUDDENLY...
Roy Crane 3-2

End Notes

Sam Kujava

The publisher suggested, "Write about Marvel Comics."

"Can you be a little more specific?" I pleaded over the phone. There was no way I could fit a mountainous idea into a molehill of a column.

"Why does Marvel outsell DC two-to-one?" the publisher offered.

"They do?" I replied weakly. They don't send sales reports to Green Bay, Wisconsin.

The publisher's long distance voice spoke with authority. "**New Teen Titans** is the only DC title that has Marvel-type sales. The rest of the DC line, the best they've got, barely compares with an average Marvel book like **Dazzler**."

"**Gosh!**" I croaked, sounding more like a neo-fan than the tough, hard-as-nails fan journalist I aspired to be. Time to save face with my employer, who may read about mild-mannered reporters, but doesn't want to hire them. "Yeah! Why **is** Marvel Comics better than DC Comics! Not that it **should** be! But fans and pros alike **think** it is, ... HMMMMM!" The little grey cells were tap dancing in my skull.

"Great idea!" the publisher boomed, having me right where he wanted me. He muttered something about 3000 words and a three-day deadline and hung up. I didn't move for a while. Ma Bell was humming sweet nothings in my ear. Here was a problem worthy of Albert Einstein. A mystery tailor-made for Sam Spade. Unfortunately, neither could type, so it was up to me!

MARVEL COMICS IS BETTER THAN DC COMICS. There, I said it. Many thousands of people, inside and outside the industry, have been making that brash statement for almost twenty years.

For two decades National Periodical Publications, or DC, had been a giant in the comic book publishing industry.

They had the first two, and best, superheroes, **Superman** and **Batman**. They ran with them, dominating the newstands, forcing Fawcett out of business after years of legal pressure, (the **Captain Marvel** people finally wearied and threw in the towel) and keeping second-rate publishing houses like the pre-Marvel Timely/Atlas from gaining more than a nominal share of the marketplace.

On one unknown, but legendary day in 1961, Marvel publisher Martin Goodman called editor/writer Stan Lee into his office. DC had revived superheroes in the late 1950s and scored well with one title filled with heroes, **Justice League of America**. Stan Lee's assignment: Come up with a Marvel version of JLA, a clutch of super-doers...an imitation, basically.

Stan Lee delivered, and made his publisher happy. But **Fantastic Four** was, from the first few issues, obviously something far different than a JLA clone. Something MORE than the average reader expected. **Fantastic Four** was followed by **Amazing Spider-Man**, **Mighty Thor**, **Iron Man** and all the rest. What could have been a quirk, an oddity, was in fact a rousing success. Marvel Comics grabbed a healthy share of consumers' dollars, and the Marvel Age of Comics became a publishing phenomenon.

All of the sudden we had a horse race.

The giant believed in its own infallibility and felt secure while Stan Lee marshalled his artists into producing their best efforts. In numbers Marvel was small in the 1960s, producing around one dozen monthly titles, give or take a few westerns. That was all Lee and his small but busy staff could comfortably manage. This was almost beneath the giant's notice. Marvel could be a fluke DC thought/wanted to think. Many other upstarts had come and gone over the years, scarcely able to grab onto DC's huge shirt tails.

The sales figures didn't entirely tell the story yet, either. Not in 1965, 1966, or 1967. DC was riding at the top of the crest of a nationwide resurgence of interest in funnybooks. "Adventures of Superman" was still in TV re-runs. New Superman cartoons were grabbing a new audience of potential buyers on Saturday mornings. And the twice-weekly "Batman" prime time show, campy and crazy, gave DC admirable clout in the comic book sales sweepstakes. No, sir. Batman was selling a million copies a month! Who cared, or even though about, little Marvel. The upstarts.

Feds fizzle out even more quickly than they explode into life. The trend followers went on to other things. The core audience remained. They seemed smaller than ever. DC wondered: Where had some of their loyal constant throng disappeared to? By late 1967, the sales figures of 'little' Marvel told the **whole** story. Young

THEY WON'T GET HERE IN TIME TO SAVE YOU!! BLAST IT... IF ONLY YOU DIDN'T MOVE SO FAST!
NOW YOU'RE NOT GONNA BEGRUDGE ME MY FEW LITTLE TALENTS ARE YOU??
CRUNCH

up-start Spider-Man was right up there in numbers with old Superman.

The giant panicked. Not only had DC never prepared for cometition, the old goats in charge barely exercised the good common sense of keeping one eye on the outside world. Good or bad, times had changed, and Stan Lee's Marvel Comics reflected new times.

DC seemed old hat, tired, unwilling to take risks. Marvel was open, brash, young, and attractive. So went the audience. Marvel Comics became number **one**, the one to beat. DC would scramble and misstep and copy and fret and fuss from that time until today, trying desperately to regain their top spot in the publishing industry.

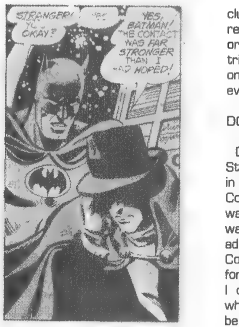
The enormously profitable Superman movies of the late 1970s have kept DC healthy and in the race. Batman and Supergirl movie projects are in the works. Marvel has grown fat and rich from its share of licensing lucre.

Dollar for dollar, Spidey mittens and Batman bath towels are probably more valued to the company accountants than comic books.

Take away the licensing fees and endless merchandising, and the sales figures still tell the story.

The "Stan Lee formula" has been well documented in the fan press. Lee himself promoted it well and often in the monthly "Marvel Bullpen Bulletins" of years past. When interviewed on a college campus or by a television reporter, Stan was forced by space restrictions to condense his standard hype. Why was Marvel so popular?

Why were Spider-Man and Hulk as popular with today's kids as Superman and Batman were with earlier generations? Lee boiled it down to: "Heroes with human problems." Spidey had acne and girl problems; The Hulk wasn't even accepted as a good guy but rather hunted as a dangerous monster; Iron Man had a weak heart that constantly threatened



his life; Thor had a father with a short temper who could render Thor powerless with godlike ease. And so on.

As a young reader I found Lee's approach to his heroes different and enticing. It was a change of pace from Batman's predictable victories and Superman's inevitable encounters with multi-colored Kryptonite. I **never** saw any great difference between DC and Marvel, not fifteen years ago, and not today in 1983.

The product is the same...comic books. The subject matter is overwhelmingly the same...heroic adventure aimed at a young male audience. Differences are minor. Flash may need 15 pages to defeat his adversary. Daredevil may take eight issues to finally nail the Owl, with many soap opera sub-plots thrown in to pad the 'epic'. **Different**, not **better**.

We still know who the good guy is. We still watch the bad guy go through his paces before the inevitable conclusion. We KNOW, whether we're reading a comic published by Marvel or DC, that our hero is going to triumph over evil. Whether it takes one issue or a dozen, good defeats evil.

Marvel Comics are different than DC Comics.

Diehards point to the strong style of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, and Steve Ditko in the early years of Marvel Comics. Comic books never quite looked that way before. Especially DC. Granted, it was new and different. As an early advocate and admirer of Marvel Comics, I even can say it was better, for a time. I didn't dump DC, though. I continued to enjoy both. Indeed, when my youthful sensibilities would be upset by a sudden change in personnel on a favorite title, I would tend to embrace the 'other' company a bit more. Like all adolescents who love things too long and too deeply, I seesawed between DC and Marvel for a few years. Some adult germ in my mind prevented me from ever choosing sides. I was entertained in both enemy camps.

Style does not fit my criterion as to why something is better than something else. Style is blue eyes on me and freckles on her and blonde hair on you. I grew up with rock and roll music blasting out of every radio but I learned to appreciate jazz and classical styles as well. **Different**, not **better**.

Gardner Fox and Stan Lee both wrote about heroes and villains. Their plots raced through the same familiar territory toward the same satisfying conclusions. House style was once a very real attraction to Marvel Comics. Once. Over the years Kirby

and Ditko and Heck and Colan have jumped from company to company, some more than once.

Art is a matter of style, and besides, new and different art is only an initial attraction. As the Mighty Comics Group found out, it is not enough to ape the slam bang action and wild acrobatics that were part of Marvel's identity. After being fooled by a look-alike, the reader was not likely to stay with the imitative Mighty line of mock Marvels.

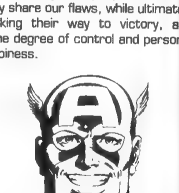
Once you've eliminated storylines and artistic mannerisms from the comparison, what is left? How has Marvel been superior to DC? Characters.

It's much more complex than a simplistic 'heroes with human problems' nutshell explanation. From the first few issues of Stan Lee's run of **Fantastic Four**, we began to get the feeling that these heroes may have resembled Superman and Batman, but they weren't exactly cut from the same mold. The Thing felt sorry about the way he looked and wasn't at all sure he wanted to play the hero game. The Human Torch was young and immature, just as happy tinkering with hot rods and taking inordinate pleasure in needling The Thing.

Spider-Man's first instinct at becoming a freak of nature was to wear a fancy costume and make a lot of money on the entertainment circuit. He wasn't actually responsible for his Uncle Ben's death, but his guilt at his early selfishness laid the blame squarely on the shoulders of a grieving Peter Parker. He became even more gentle and devoted to Aunt May, while using his Spider-Man persona to cut

loose and get out all of his pent-up agressions.

Iron Man and Daredevil were deeply in love with Pepper Potts and Karen Page, respectively, but at odds whether to lay their physical handicaps on these devoted women. Indeed, the doubts many of these Marvel heroes had prevented them from having meaningful conversations, much less relationships, with various girlfriends. These characters felt heartache and sacrifice just as strongly as their youthful, usually teen-age audience, did. Superman and Batman were inhumanly unromantic, embarressed by outward displays of affection. Reed Richards and Sue Storm had a warm, if rocky relationship from the outset. And it got better! It culminated in marriage in just a few years, the readers watching the change while along for the ride. One couldn't help but feel satisfied at the obvious growth in these Marvel characters. How long did readers follow Superman, hoping he would finally pop the question to Lois Lane? Instead, the editors fudged and gave you imaginary marriages and parallel dimension versions of the wedding day. Now, Marvel and DC characters are **all** fictional, figments of imaginations. DC kept reminding you of that fact, fitting their cardboard heroes into the same slots, having them mouth the same tired platitudes. Marvel heroes may have been just as fictional, but Lee and company imbued the whole landscape with **semblance** of real life. For all the colorful costumes and astounding abilities, we relate to Captain America and The Angel as people we know. They share our flaws, while ultimately working their way to victory, and some degree of control and personal happiness.



Just what we all dream of, aspire to. At DC the operative for a number of years has been to simply set up obstacles for the heroes to knock down. At Marvel the dilemma or villain was secondary, not all-important. Personal problems, concerns about close friends, doubts about the rightness of the situation plagued the Marvel hero as much as the Red Skull

or Attuma.

It is as simple as that. The differences I describe are slight, subtle... the infrequent newstand buyer is not going to discern any great difference between one comic book and another. Even one or two initial tries may not "sell" you on the difference that Marvel gives. Once you've been attracted by the more lively art or slightly sarcastic dialog, chances are very good that you'll come to stay with the books mainly because you care about the characters.

I had a childhood friend who shared my love for Marvel Comics in the late sixties and early seventies. He's been away from comics for years but talks to me about them on occasion. He doesn't ask what Jack Kirby is drawing or what book Roy Thomas is writing and he actually doesn't care. His only questions concern the welfare of Spider-Man. How is Iron Man doing? How many kids do Reed and Sue have? Has the Hulk found any peace or is General Ross still hounding him?

These are not questions one asks about musty old comic books. He wants to know about people who are as real to him as any old school friends. He's not deranged enough to mistake fictional funnybook denizens for real people. But Marvel characters are as close as comics have gotten to representing relevant, personal hopes and dreams in silly superhero characters.

If it is that simple, why hasn't DC mastered the 'Marvel style' of characterization and brought their books' sales up to the Marvel level? Oh, they've tried, and they're trying still. But the effort isn't as simple as my explanation.

DC has forty years of a specific reputation to overcome. Superman and Batman and their clan have the onus of being thought of as strictly fairy tale stuff for little kiddies. You can point to over a decade of the Batman, dreaded creature of the night, but the prevailing opinion on Bats is Bat-Gadgets and punning teenage sidekick...still.

If you sit down and think about it, there is no real difference between the publishing houses of DC and Marvel. They both produce comic books on a regular basis. What made Marvel popular can add to DC's tarnished luster. They've got the talent at DC now, much of it transplanted from Marvel.

But try and get around the reputations. The fans at the comic shops

believe that **Marvel is better than DC**. Many of them won't even give those hated DC books a try. In the backs of the minds of some pros, they fall for this **perceived attitude**. Look at the work of some favorite writer or artist who has labored at Marvel and is now gainfully employed at DC. Their work is usually not up to the standards of the work they did at Marvel, mere months before. Since writer and artist retain the same abilities and reportedly have the same opportunities for creative expression at Marvel and DC, it can only be that rotten stereotype that impedes their progress. Try as one might, it's nearly impossible to shake from one's consciousness the big lie that DC is less open, more restrictive, and content to churn out more of the same old stuff and that Marvel is hot, young, bursting with challenges and ambitious young tyros. All of this is half-true, simple-minded, but easier to swallow than the difficult realities of creativity.

When you see a black man walking towards you on the street, do you get nervous? It is wrong, but you can't shake the feeling that a black man means you bodily harm. When you run across an American Indian, do you expect him to be drunk? Do all Orientals know the martial arts? We are conditioned to accept stereotypes about people, no matter how silly or hurtful they may be.

Do artists and writers, paid to turn out x-number of pages every month, accept the prevailing attitude about the 'differences' between DC and Marvel? Creative types have to juggle ego, talent, and deadlines as it is. Could it be that believing certain comfortable stereotypes about your employers makes the accomplishing of your job just that much easier? [No, DC never does this kind of thing, so I won't even try it.] [Hey, this is Superman! Better not rock the boat.] And so on.

I don't believe in better or worse. More or less. When it comes to comics, DC and Marvel are both on solid ground. In the early sixties, Marvel did get ahead of their competitors. DC stayed in the starting gate for a few years, and spent the next decade catching up. But no matter what sales figures say or fans and pros may want to believe to make the ride less bumpy, **this race is being run on the same track**.

An artist or a writer is limited only by his own abilities. A comic book fan can praise Marvel and damn DC, but he is only limiting his own choices. When you believe that Marvel is better than DC Comics you've already lost out. Reject labels and tired truisms. Find out what you **like** in the field of comics, if your interest lies there. You may discover, to your unending joy, that the best of everything usually gets spread out everywhere you look.

The MIGHTY CRUSADERS® are back...and RED CIRCLE has them!

The 32-page ***color*** comic will be printed on ***white*** stock with a one dollar price tag. ***The Mighty Crusaders***, like the rest of the ***Red Circle Comics*** due out, will be a hot collectors item.

Issue #1, top Marvel and D.C. artist, Rich Buckler, will do the editing, writing and art. The first book features 8 earth-shattering superheroes. A special bonus in issue #1 will feature an origin section on all 8 heroes in the Crusaders. All of which are scheduled to co-star or feature in their own comic.

And only ***Red Circle*** has The Fly, The Jaguar, The Shield, and The Black Hood. Excitement, power, and even new talent, we got it. Look out world, 'cause ***Red Circle*** is coming through!!!!!

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THE WEB

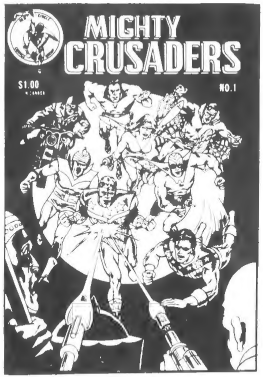
The JAGUAR

LANCELOT STRONG THE SHIELD

THE COMET

THE GOLDEN AGE SHIELD

THE BLACKHOOD



Mighty Crusaders #1

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